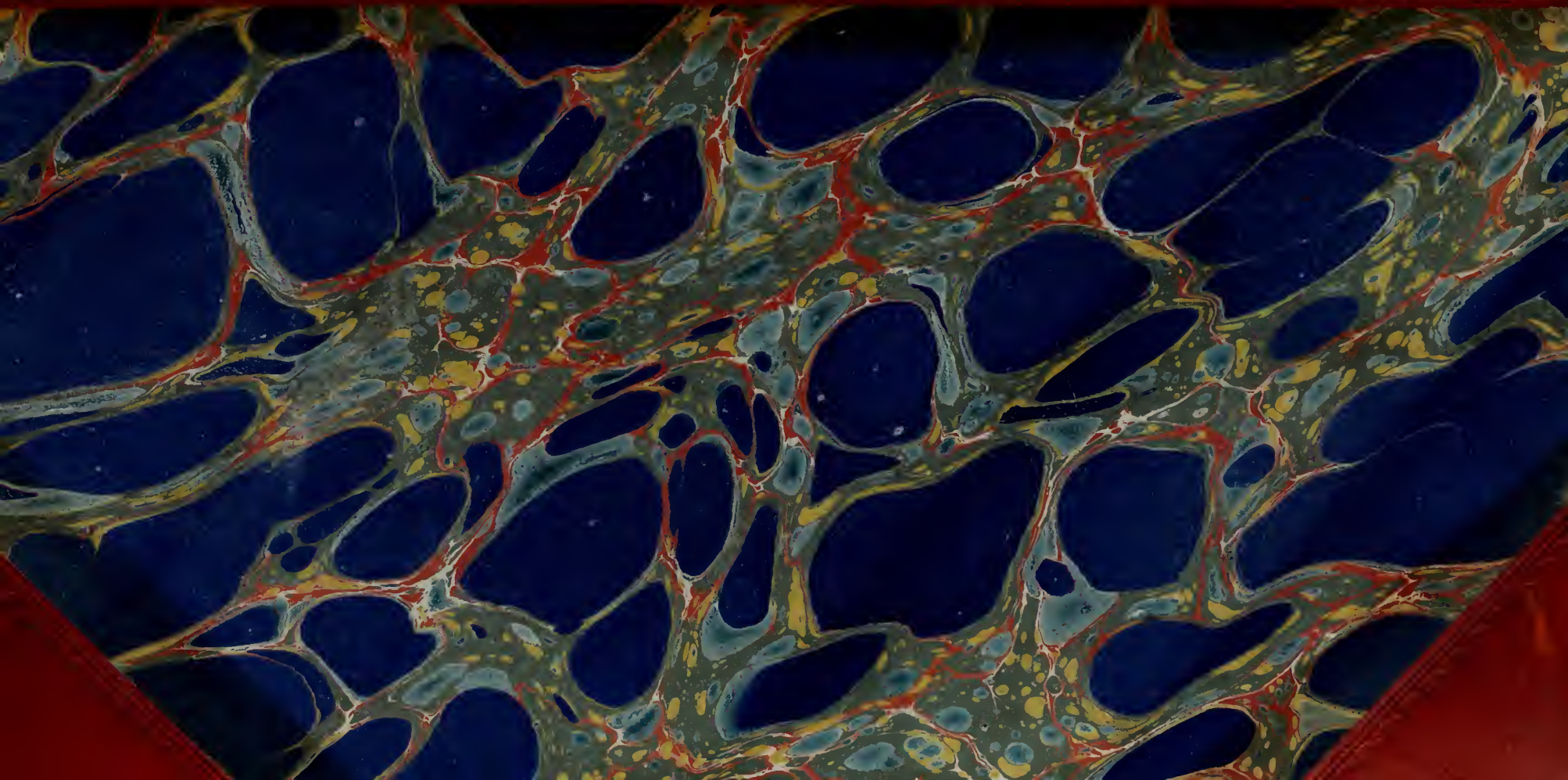
3 1761 08819862 7



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
University of Toronto

http://www.archive.org/details/argosythe49wood

M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOLUME XLIX.

January to June, 1890.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET, LONDON, W.
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.
All rights reserved.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY J. OGDEN AND CO. LIMITED,
GREAT SAFFRON HILL, E.C.

AP
4
A7
V.49

CONTENTS.

THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL. By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne." With Illustrations by M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

PAGE

Chap. I. The Major and Aunt Copp 1
II. The Major's Investment 9
III. The End of the Day 15
IV. Hester's Romance 89
V. The Lady Georgina 99
VI. The Infirmary Pupil 177
VII. The Great Cause: "Newcome *versus* Needham" . . 185
VIII. The Reverend Simon Whistler 190
IX. Chelson 265
X. Miss Zink's Hysterics 276
XI. A Wedding 353
XII. Captain Kerleton 362
XIII. Lucy's Romance 370
XIV. The Physician and his Wife 441
XV. Father and Daughter 448
XVI. Halliwell House 456

FAIR NORMANDY. By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S. With 39 Illustrations 52, 137, 224, 309, 398, 490

Animal Disguise and Defence. By ALEX. H. JAPP, LL.D. . 285
Becalmed. By G. B. STUART 524
"Beside all Waters." By CHRISTIAN BURKE 251
By the Gates of the Sea. By ALEXANDER LAMONT . . . 88
Caterina: A Story of Mesmerism. By LETITIA MCCLINTOCK . 202
"Glittering Gold." By JESSIE LEETE 294
Her Only Chance. 465
Idle Time Not Idly Spent 377
Incident in Mr. Lanford's Life, An. By FRANCES H. LOW . . 429
Isabel Clifford, M.D. 156
"John Smith, Jun." By E. J. CLAYDEN. 115
Lady's Coin, The. By E. CHILTON 169
Lady's Privilege, A. By CHARLES HERVEY 257
Loch Katrine. By GEORGE COTTERELL 114
Love and Spring. By SYDNEY GREY 201
Lovely Widow, The. By MINNIE DOUGLAS 326
Milestone, The 51
Mrs. Walsingham's Butterfly 420
Night Boat from Boulogne, The. By ESME STUART . . . 33
Ode to Morning. Illustrated 330

PAGE
On Finding an Old Letter 155
One Christmas Eve 75
Rachel. By M. E. Davenport 381
Ramble on Copper, A. By Esme Stuart 197
Robert Browning. By E. F. Bridell Fox 108
Some Recollections of an Aged Gentlewoman 425
Song of Life, A. By Fanny Forrester 325
Sonnets. By Julia Kavanagh . . 32, 107, 243, 308, 419, 464
Spring-time Memories 264
Star Worship 440
Tale of the Temple, A 72
The Acorn and the Mushroom 514
The Fifth of May: Manzoni's Ode to Napoleon 488
Third Class. By An Elderly Lady 27
Verses. By Caroline Radford 196
Volentibus Annis. By Lindon Meadows 176
White Cat, The. By Austin H. Brand 244

POETRY.

Sonnets. By Julia Kavanagh . . 32, 107, 243, 308, 419, 464
The Milestone. By Sydney Grey 51
By the Gates of the Sea. By Alexander Lamont . . . 88
Loch Katrine. By George Cotterell 114
On Finding an Old Letter 155
Volentibus Annis. By Lindon Meadows 176
Verses. By Caroline Radford 196
Love and Spring. By Sydney Grey 201
Spring-time Memories 264
A Song of Life. By Fanny Forrester 305
Ode to Morning. Illustrated 336
Star Worship 440
The Fifth of May: Manzoni's Ode to Napoleon 488
The Acorn and the Mushroom 514
Becalmed. By G. B. Stuart 524

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Illustrations to The House of Halliwell:

"Silence all," cried the Major. "Children, we are in the hands of an unknown power."
"Shall I give you back your freedom?" uttered Hester.
It was sooner than they had expected her, and they were fairly caught.
"Mamma," said Hester, but very quietly, "you are keeping us in suspense."
"They are my nieces," returned Aunt Copp. "Miss Halliwell and Miss Lucy Halliwell."
It was a strange meeting.

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1890.

THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.*

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER I.

THE MAJOR. AND AUNT COPP.

A FAMILY party was gathered round the drawing-room fire in the house of Major Halliwell: a handsome residence, situated in the village of Seaford, some twenty miles' distance from London. It was a fine, warm evening in the beginning of September, and there was little need of a fire; but the Major had passed some of his days in India, and always took to evening fires before anyone else thought of them.

The Major was the chief representative of the name and House of Halliwell. A noble and renowned and loyal house it had been in its palmy days; but the earldom had become extinct in the early time of George the Third, and its descendants had since been dwindling down in the scale of grandeur. The Major's eldest girl was named after one who had been a heroine in her generation—the Lady Hester Halliwell, sister of the last Lord Halliwell. The Lady Hester had refused to marry, but had won fame and love for her good and noble and charitable deeds. Her portrait was reverently preserved in the Major's drawing-room, and its face certainly bore a remarkable resemblance to that of her namesake, the present Hester.

Major Halliwell was a good-natured, merry man, who had made money in India, had sold out of the King's service, and come home to enjoy it. Then the Major married. He is a man, you see, of about six-and-sixty now, whilst his children are young. Mrs. Halliwell

* "THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL" was written by Mrs. Henry Wood many years ago—even as far back as the days when she had not as yet written "East Lynne." It was at that time prepared for publication in three volumes, but was never offered to any Publishing Firm.

The story somewhat differs in style and construction from the Author's subsequent works, but possibly for that reason may gain an additional interest as showing forth the development of dramatic and constructive force, of the life and movement of each separate set of dramatis personæ, as a writer, passing from work

—she sits on the opposite side of the fire to the Major, and wears a grey satin gown—is a stately, handsome woman, with a thoughtful countenance. Five children remain out of a large family. Alfred, a fine young man of twenty; Hester, just eighteen, who does not seem inclined to be tall, but she has the Lady Hester's grave, kindly face and reflective eye; Jane, who is not here to-night; Lucy, a merry girl of fifteen; and little Mary, the youngest born.

When dusk came on, Mrs. Halliwell rang for lights. The servant who entered with them was turning to close the inside shutters and draw the crimson curtains, but Mary stood there.

"Stop a bit, John," said the child; "I want to see what that is at the gate."

The man was taller than the child, and could see over the hedge at the foot of the garden. "It is the stage-coach, miss," he said.

"The stage-coach!" echoed Alfred. "At our gate?"

Hester and Lucy followed him to the window. A lady, so far as they could see through the gate and the dusk, had stepped from the coach, and an enormous box was being got down from the roof.

"Oh!" cried Mary, in delight; "suppose it is Jane come back for something! I hope it is."

"You little stupid!" retorted Alfred. "As if Jane would come back again!"

"That looks like a sea-chest," persisted Mary, "and Jane's——"

"I think it is Aunt Copp," interrupted Hester.

"Aunt Copp!" echoed the Major, springing to the window, whilst Alfred flew out to the gate.

He returned triumphantly, Aunt Copp on his arm; the guard, and John, and a man who was passing and volunteered help, followed, lugging at the sea-chest. "Aunt Copp," as she was universally called in the family, was the Major's only sister, but quite young enough to be his daughter. She was short and stout; a pale, round, complacent face, and black eyes. Their father, Colonel Halliwell, had likewise spent a large portion of his life in India; his son was born before he went there, his daughter after his return; and that was not for many, many years. Aunt Copp was a wonderful woman, positive and contradictory in manner, kind, like the Major, at

to work, gains experience which leads to higher flights of thought and fancy. For, as a great essayist recently remarked, talent exhausts itself, but genius grows and goes on from strength to strength. In the instance of Mrs. Henry Wood it was chiefly her physical powers—the ability to sit at her table, the mere exertion of writing—that declined, and at the last almost deserted her.

Therefore, if Mrs. Henry Wood were still here, it is probable that the Story of "The House of Halliwell" would be widened and elaborated; but the interest of the contrast of this early work with the methods adopted in Mrs. Henry Wood's later works would be lost to the reader.

On the other hand, considering the nature of the story and the somewhat gentle and subdued lines on which it is written, it may be a matter of opinion whether it has not been carried out as successfully as any of the author's later works.

For every page of "The House of Halliwell," from the opening to the closing

heart, and so good-natured that people used to say she would give away her head if it were loose. She had been self-willed, not disobedient, in the matter of her marriage, and had wedded a sailor, a captain in the merchant service. She might have done so much better, everyone told her. Of course she might, was her answer, had she chosen to do so, but she did not choose. She was wont to accompany Captain Copp on his voyages, and they had thought her absent on one now. They all gathered round her and took her things off, overwhelming her with questions, while Mrs. Halliwell ordered in the tea.

"Where and when did you land?" inquired her brother.

"Got into Liverpool three days ago. An eight months' run we have had of it home; contrary winds all the way."

"Where from last?"

"China," returned Aunt Copp. "Brought in a cargo of tea. Right glad to my heart was I to touch land, for young Sam was getting worse than a monkey on board, climbing up the rigging, and holding on by one foot, and the more I called to him the more he'd stop. He has learned to swear: you should hear him."

"I advised you not to take him," said the Major.

"I wish we had not taken him. But the Captain would, and I would; and there's an end of it. As soon as we landed, I inquired for a good, sharp boarding-school, and they told me of two. I took my young gentleman to an outfitter's, rigged him out, clapped him into a postchaise, and drove him off to the nearest."

"Without inquiries or references?" demanded Mrs. Halliwell.

"What's the good of them?" asked Aunt Copp. "I saw it was a respectable place, with forty boys in it. They live well, and that's the chief thing: plenty of good roast meat and pudding, for I saw the lads at dinner. Forty pounds a year, and forty-four if he stays the holidays. The master asked me what he was to be, and young Sam spoke up for himself, as perky as possible. 'A sailor,' said he; 'and it's no use mamma saying I sha'n't.'"

"You cannot expect him to choose anything else, Rebecca," cried the Major, "after letting him taste salt water for eighteen months."

"As good take to salt water as stop where there's nothing but

scenes, bears the unmistakable impression of the hand of the author of "East Lynne," whose place in the world of Fiction is marked by so distinct a style and individuality that these are at once identified. In the present story, also, the reader is introduced to the characters of Aunt Copp and her son Sam—characters which the author again introduced and described in her novel of "The Red Court Farm:" not repeating the incidents, but carrying on the lives. Those who have read that story will, we believe, welcome Aunt Copp in the somewhat earlier days of her career; whilst others who have not read it will receive the energetic but humorous lady, and her equally downright and unsophisticated son, as new and entertaining creations.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the two stories—"The House of Halliwell" and "The Red Court Farm"—are distinctly separate and independent, the one of the other.—C. W. W.

fresh," replied Mrs. Copp; "only I don't say so before young Sam. We don't have half the bother at sea that you do on land."

"Where have you left the Captain?"

"With the ship. She wants a deal of overhauling, and of course old Sam must be in the thick of it, or it wouldn't be him. Six or eight weeks the men will be about it, and the Captain busier than they all the time. Children, I have brought you all a present from China; seven presents have I got in my chest. If it had not been for those presents, I don't know that I should have dragged the chest here; a regular fight I had with the guard about bringing it."

"There are not seven of them now, Rebecca," said Major Halliwell, dropping his voice.

"No! Where are they then?"

"Two are taken, and one we lost to-day—in a different manner."

"Bless my heart!" ejaculated Mrs. Copp, the latter part of the sentence rendering her oblivious of the former. "Lost one to-day! How?"

"Jane was married this morning."

Aunt Copp's mouth opened with astonishment, and she looked from one to the other. "Married! Jane Halliwell! Your daughter Jane?"

"And there's such a great wedding-cake," cried Mary.

"Then, Major, I can only think you and Mrs. Halliwell are both bereft of your senses. A young thing like Jane! Why, she was in short frocks when I left."

"That is two years ago, Aunt Copp," interposed Hester.

"Jane is young, too young," sighed Mrs. Halliwell. "She was seventeen last week. But the gentleman to whom she was engaged was going out to India, and wished to take her. Had we refused, they might have worn out their lives waiting for each other."

"I should have refused," said Aunt Copp, positively; "and boxed Jane's ears for thinking of such a thing. I only wish I had been at home. Who has she married?"

"Lieutenant Pepper. A very delightful young man."

"Possesses nothing, of course," growled Aunt Copp, "but his pay and his regimentals."

"Indeed, he does" laughed the Major; "he made a very fair settlement on Jane."

"I don't care," persisted Aunt Copp. "If he had settled all Calcutta and the Ganges on her, she ought not to have married. Throwing a child like that on Indian society with no one to look after her."

"I do not fear for Jane," said Mrs. Halliwell. "We did propose that they should wait for a year or two, and Mr. Pepper proceed without her; but he was much against it, and——"

"To be sure," interrupted Aunt Copp. "Children are against taking physic, but it's good for them."

"I am glad we did not separate them," said Mrs. Halliwell,

musingly. "Those delayed marriages are so frequently frustrated for good. Had it turned out so in this case, Jane might have blamed us all her life."

"Well, it's done, and it can't be undone," concluded Aunt Copp. "How can I send Jane's present after her?"

"Don't attempt it," advised the Major. "They sail at the end of the week, and Jane has a van-load of fine things as it is. Give it to Hester instead."

"I must say one thing," resumed Mrs. Copp, "that, for a wedding-day, you are desperately quiet. I never heard of such a thing as remaining quietly at home, with not a soul but yourselves. When I was married, girls, we had a ball in the evening, and I and my husband, your uncle Sam, stopped and opened it."

"We said we had lost two children besides Jane," said Mrs. Halliwell, in a half whisper. "We have only thrown off our mourning for to-day, and shall resume it to-morrow. How could we have any rejoicing?"

"Tell me about it," said Mrs. Copp.

"It was darling little James and Frederick," answered Lucy, with tears in her eyes. "They died last May."

"Both died?"

"Both. Only two days apart from each other."

"My patience! Poor little dears. What was it?"

"Scarlet fever," cried the Major; "it was raging in the neighbourhood, and the three young ones took it. Mary recovered, but the poor boys died."

"Ah!" groaned Aunt Copp, "that was bad management. I wish I had been at home. What doctors did you have?"

"Mr. Davis, the medical man here. They were only ill, one four, the other five days."

"I tell you, then, it was bad management took those boys, and nothing else."

"I think it was not quite that," sighed Mrs. Halliwell.

"What else, pray?" snapped Aunt Copp.

"God's will."

Aunt Copp was silent for a bit: then she resumed:—

"There's one plan to be pursued with scarlet fever, and that is, before it comes on, the very instant you have a suspicion that the child is sickening for it, give him a regular good dosing. Never mind his kicking and crying, and saying he won't take medicine, give it him: the more he fights, the more you give. In a few hours he will be much more subdued; and the fever, when it comes, will take less hold upon the system; it won't mount to the throat. Give the child plenty to drink, and keep him cool, and he will have it lightly."

"But, Aunt Copp," broke in Alfred, much amused, "suppose it is not the fever that he is sickening for? You would waste your medicine."

"Never mind, lad. I am quite certain that three parts of the fatal cases of scarlet fever are caused by the neglect of this preparatory measure. I saved my boy's life, Major, when he sickened for it; and I would have saved yours."

"I think a great deal does lie in the treatment," observed Major Halliwell.

"Everything lies in it," responded Aunt Copp. "However, talking over these gloomy things will not make you all brighter. The poor little darlings are in Heaven, better off than they would ever have been here."

"Aunt Copp," whispered Hester, later in the evening, "will you not tell our fortunes? You know you never would."

"Because, child, I have told some that have come true, and then folk have turned round and blamed me for frightening them."

"I shall not. I wish you would tell mine. Do. We ought to have some fun this evening."

"If I tell you bad luck, you will not call it fun."

"Oh, yes, I shall."

"You will promise to stand it, without being afraid?"

"That I will," laughed Hester.

"Well, get the cards then. I suppose it is allowable, Major?"

"Allowable! such trash as that! You may tell them all night if you like."

"If you can really find amusement in anything so nonsensical," added Mrs. Halliwell, with an imperceptible curl of the lip.

"Do not ridicule too soon," replied Aunt Copp. "Shuffle and cut the cards, Hester."

"Shuffle well, Hester," said her brother, as he leaned over Aunt Copp's chair and laughed. "Let us hear what sort of a husband you are to have."

"Hallo, Master Alfred," broke in the Major, with a comical expression of countenance; "a staunch Churchman, as you are to be, has no business to watch the dealings of the black art. When you come to be ordained, how will you face your bishop, sir?"

"Major," interrupted Mrs. Copp, "you will oblige me by not talking."

"Silence all," cried the Major. "Children, we are in the hands of an unknown power."

"Well," exclaimed one of them impatiently, as Aunt Copp's process appeared to grow rather tedious, "what is Hester's fortune?"

"Hester, child, it is nothing good," said Aunt Copp. "Shall I tell it you?"

"Oh, please do," laughed Hester.

"Well then, child, to begin with, you will not have a husband at all. You'll be pretty near it, but somehow it will slip away, and you'll never marry."

"What a dreadful thing!" uttered Lucy, with a long face. "I will not have mine told."

"I don't know that Hester will care much about it, though," resumed Aunt Copp, her eyes following the cards. "For it seems as if you would be in the midst of business, child, all your life; the business of others: some good, some bad. I should say you would be full of usefulness, my dear, so console yourself."

"Ay, do console yourself, Hester," mocked the Major. "I hope you will be able to sleep to-night."

Mrs. Copp was nettled. "You may make as much game as you like, James, but I know the cards tell true, and that Hester will be an old maid. You'll see."

"I sha'n't live to see," responded the Major, "it will be beyond my time. Hester, how many cats shall you keep?"

"Shall I tell yours?" exclaimed Mrs. Copp, with animation. "Come, Major; and then you will prove whether I tell true or not."

"Very well," answered the Major. "Hand over the cards. Shuffle first, isn't it?"

Hester stole round the table and laid her hand on the pack. "Papa," she said, "do not have it done."

The Major turned and put on his spectacles to stare at her.

"Why, Hester! you are never such a goose!"

"I do not believe in what Aunt Copp has told me, or care for it," was the remark of Hester. "But if she said anything bad to you, papa, I might think of it."

"Be quiet, Hester," said Aunt Copp. "I'll tell him, and then he'll remember not to mock at me."

The Major nodded at his children, and they looked on with a smile. All, except Hester: she stood, grave and quiet, one arm folded over the other.

"If I did not know to the contrary," began Aunt Copp, studying the Major's "fortune" in the cards, as they were arrayed out before her, "I should say you were immersed in business, James. Here you are, you see, up to your eyes in worry."

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the Major. "Go on."

"I had rather not go on," replied Aunt Copp, after another pause. "It is the worst fortune I ever told in my life. Here's perplexity, disappointment, loss of money, not only to you, but to all who surround you; and there's something worse than that."

"Tell it out," cried the Major.

"Death," said Aunt Copp, "and very speedy. It follows you; it will follow you, place the cards as I will."

The Major laughed till his eyes watered. "Alfred, boy, run for a lawyer. I'll make my will."

Aunt Copp pushed the cards together, and threw them on a side-table. "I am sorry I told it," she said.

"Look at Hester!" exclaimed Alfred, who was making merry, like his father. She was standing in the same position, every vestige of colour having forsaken her face. Mrs. Halliwell indignantly reproached her.

Hester aroused herself. "Mamma, I do not put faith in it; I don't know what made me look as I did. It is only nonsense."

"Of course it is," haughtily responded Mrs. Halliwell. "Take the keys, Hester, and reach out the wine and the wedding-cake. Your aunt has not yet wished prosperity and happiness to Jane."

Hester took the keys, and departed on her errand. But her face was white still.

"Aunt Copp, where did you learn to tell fortunes?" demanded Lucy.

"On my first voyage to India, Lucy: that is, coming home. We had an Indian woman on board, an ayah, as they are called, who was nursing a sick lady, and I learnt it of her."

"Is it the way they do it in England?"

"Do what?" returned Mrs. Copp, sharply.

"That they tell fortunes on the cards in England," explained Lucy.

"Certainly not," indignantly replied Mrs. Copp. "As if I would trouble my head with such child's play as that."

Lucy coloured and hesitated. "Aunt Copp, does your way *always* tell true?"

Aunt Copp, in her turn, hesitated: it was a home question, after what she had just promised the Major. "I do not know that it always tells true, Lucy; it does sometimes. It is very rarely that I can be persuaded into telling it. I was foolish to have been so to-night. What a brave wedding-cake!"

"It was when it was whole," said Mrs. Halliwell. "Jane took some of it with her to eat on the voyage."

"Eat on the voyage!" echoed Aunt Copp. "Ah! Jane is like a young bear, just now—all her sorrows to come: as she will find, when she is in the midst of sea-sickness. I know I wished the ship would go to the bottom and I, poor soul, with it, when I went my first voyage. Wedding-cake at sea!"

"I could eat wedding-cake even if I were sea-sick," cried Lucy, hoping her mamma was going to cut her a large piece then and there.

"Could you, my dear?" significantly returned Aunt Copp. "Major, how came you to let them sail at this season? They will come in for all the equinoctial gales."

"Pepper could not choose his time. He had to go when he was ordered."

"Poor Jane! a fine sick bear's life she will have of it. I'd rather stand a hurricane than the winds of the equinox."

And, what with talking, drinking healths, and the wedding-cake, the evening came to a close, and the young people retired.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAJOR'S INVESTMENT.

"Now for a bit of cosy chat all to ourselves, according to old custom," cried Aunt Copp, drawing her chair to the fire between Major and Mrs. Halliwell, and putting her feet on the fender. "What a good-looking young fellow Alfred grows!"

"He'll do," said Major Halliwell.

"Do! I should think his looks would do. Why in the world do you make a parson of him?"

"He did not like the army. And one could not put a Halliwell to trade."

"But a parson!" remonstrated Aunt Copp. "Poor creatures, if they do get into any little scrape or peccadillo, it must put such a weight of responsibility on their heads. And men are not saints all their lives long, parsons or no parsons."

"Oh, he will get along, just as other parsons do," laughed the Major.

"He is an excellently-disposed lad," added Mrs. Halliwell. "He has not a vice about him."

"Mothers always think that," responded Aunt Copp, in her provoking way. "I hope he'll get a good living: not one of your paltry starvation things, at a hundred a-year."

"I expect to leave him something worth having, Rebecca," said the Major. "More than I once thought for."

"How's that?" cried Aunt Copp, pricking up her ears. "They'll have—now there are only five of them—from three to four thousand each, I suppose."

"Double that, I hope," said the Major. "Your fortune-telling cards were not far out to-night, when they said I was up to my ears in business. I am not, but my money is."

"What on earth do you mean?" questioned Aunt Copp.

"I withdrew my money from the funds about fourteen months ago, to invest it. It brings me in larger interest, and the capital—whenever I like to withdraw it—will also be doubled in the shape of a bonus."

"Invest it in what?" was the sharp question.

"In a Company. The Perpetual Aid Fire and Life Insurance Company."

Aunt Copp gazed at the Major. "What possessed you to do that? And you," she added, turning short round to Mrs. Halliwell, "how could you let him do it?"

"Did anyone ever do a thing yet that you did not find fault with, Rebecca?" testily demanded the Major.

"Because I have my weather eye open, and can see into things clearer than some folk," responded Aunt Copp. "Mrs. Halliwell, I

say," laying her hand on that lady's, "how came you to let James risk his children's money?"

"If we must tell you the truth, Rebecca, I did not know of it until it was done," was the reply.

"If there's a nuisance in the world, it is for women to interfere in business matters," chimed in the Major. "It's what they don't understand, and they get worried and fidgety. I knew my wife would be afraid and say, 'Don't risk it;' so I just did it, and told her when it was done."

Aunt Copp paused. "James," she resumed in a very grave tone, "if I were to tell you you have committed a sin in doing this you would not believe me."

The Major whistled. "Just as much as I believed you when you told me I was going to die."

"What did you do it for?"

"To make more money, of course."

"You had plenty. Plenty for comfort, and a nice little fortune for each child after you."

"There is no law against making money, is there?"

"There is no law that will bring you up to be tried for it by judge and jury; but I know this, I'd rather be bound to the figure-head of our ship and be sent adrift in her without a helmsman, than I would wickedly risk the little money that belonged to my child. Do you suppose these reckless schemes don't bring their own punishment with them? Of course they do."

"That's right," cried the Major. "Go on, Becky."

"Suppose the thing fails, this precious fire company, where——"

"It's not going to fail," interrupted the Major; "it's paying heavy dividends."

"*Suppose* it fails," persisted Aunt Copp, "and the money disappears down Davy Jones's locker, you will have committed a crime against your own children. You will, James Halliwell."

"Rubbish," answered the Major.

"And the children will pass their lives expiating your sin. I tell you, James, it is a sin; some may call it imprudence, but it is nothing less than sin: and they must struggle and fight their way through life, and so expiate it."

"It is time to go to bed," said the Major.

"Bed can wait. The very fact of your having to conceal the transaction from your wife ought to have proved to you that it was a piece of wrong-doing. When a man takes to deceiving his wife, good-bye to prosperity. Mrs. Halliwell, tell me—had James consulted you about using the money, would you have consented?"

"No," was the reply. "I should have dreaded the risk."

"Nor any other woman in her senses. You talk about women not understanding business, Major; they are a great deal clearer-sighted than men. Now do you know what you must do, James?"

"Well?"

"Go up to London without a day's delay, and get your money out of the fire. If you can't get the doubled capital, held out as a bait, take the single, and put it into the funds again."

"Impossible," laughed the Major. "There must be three months' notice of withdrawal first."

"How much notice?" returned Aunt Copp, in a very sharp tone.

"Three months."

"Then give the notice to-morrow, and take it out at the three months' end. Will you do this?"

"Not if I know it, Becky. It pays me too good interest."

"Then just see if you don't repent it. And the Lord help your poor wronged children!"

The Major rose, stretched himself, and spoke good-humouredly. "You are brighter at sea than you are on land, Becky, think of it as you will. Good-night; pleasant dreams to you."

"Pleasant dreams to you, if your conscience will allow of them," retorted Aunt Copp. "Make him do it," she whispered to Mrs. Halliwell.

This was on the Tuesday. On the following Monday, as they were seated at breakfast, the Major said he was going to London.

"To do what I recommended?" asked Aunt Copp, eagerly.

"Not I," said the Major, while Mrs. Halliwell gave an almost imperceptible shake of the head as her sister-in-law glanced at her. "I am going for a few hours' pleasure. Will you go with me, Becky?"

"Not to-day," replied Mrs. Copp. "How do you go?"

"Harkaway coach. It leaves here at eleven, and gets back at nine. Alfred, when you have finished breakfast, you can run to the Wheatsheaf, and secure me a place. Box seat, mind."

"You had better return inside," said Mrs. Halliwell to her husband.

"What for? A fine evening, as this will be."

"If you once catch your winter's cough, you know there's no getting rid of it till spring."

"I am not likely to catch it in September, Jane," returned the Major. "Box seat, Alfred, both ways."

"We are breakfasting later than usual," remarked Lucy. "I shall be late at school."

"I don't know how it was," observed the Major, "I meant to be down earlier than usual this morning. And I did get up in time. But there were so many hindrances; first one thing went wrong, then another. I could not find my things, and the trousers I first put on were the wrong ones, and I had to change them. Then I managed to overturn my shaving water, wetted my stockings, which I had to change also, and wait for more water. Altogether I never was so long getting up before; first one delay and then another; there was no end to it."

"Major," cried Aunt Copp, "this will be an unlucky day to you."

"It will be what?" echoed the Major.

"An unlucky day. Those retardings, those apparent accidents, don't come for nothing. You will hear bad news, or be crossed in some way."

"You were cut out for a sailor's wife, with your superstitions," laughed the Major. "I suppose you would not sail on a Friday for the sea and all that's on it."

"There you are wrong, then, Major, for I think Friday just as good as any other day. Only my husband never sails on a Friday, out of deference to the prejudices of the crew. But I'll tell you what I would not do—not sail at all, if things went cross and unlucky with me the first day of the voyage."

"Bravo!" said Major Halliwell.

"I was not superstitious by nature," returned Aunt Copp; "nobody less so. It has been forced on me by experience. You see, now, whether this day won't have something wrong about it, and tell me to-night. *It was as if you ought not to dress; as if some invisible power would warn you not to get up to what was before you.*"

"Well, London is before me to-day," returned the Major. "I'll look out for Mother Shipton's prophecies in town, Becky, and bring them down. They'll just suit you."

About a quarter to eleven he wished them good-morning, and strolled leisurely towards the "Wheatsheaf," the starting place of the Harkaway. In a little while, however, they saw him coming back again, much more quickly.

"What's up now?" cried Aunt Copp. "He has forgotten something. Just like him."

"Look here," cried the Major, turning himself round before the window, and displaying a large fracture in the sleeve of his coat.

"What a slashing rent!" exclaimed Aunt Copp. "How did you do that?"

"A nasty nail they had in the post of the horse trough. I was leaning against it, watching the Harkaway load, and talking to Gibbons, I felt it tear."

"Shall I sew it up for you?" asked Aunt Copp.

"No, thank you. That's sea fashion. Land fashion is to change it for another. Hester, run upstairs, and bring me the coat you will find in the bottom drawer."

Hester soon brought it, and her father put it on. Mrs. Halliwell and Aunt Copp lamented over the rent.

"It must go to the tailor's," said the Major. "Send it this morning, Jane."

"I think I could do it just as neatly as the tailor, papa," said Hester. "Shall I try?"

"Ay, child. If you do it well, I'll give you five shillings." And Hester's eyes brightened.

"Never was such a handy girl at her needle as that!" exclaimed

Aunt Copp, looking at Hester. "She should see our cobbling on board."

"Good-bye, once again," cried the Major.

"Mind you bring the oysters with you," called out Mrs. Halliwell.

"And mind you come in time for supper," added Aunt Copp.

It was on the stroke of eleven, and Hester had begun her task, when they discerned the Major coming back again full pelt.

"Well, if ever I knew such a thing as this!" ejaculated Aunt Copp, and she and Mrs. Halliwell ran out and met him half way down the gravel walk.

"My pocket-book," panted the Major, "my pocket-book. I omitted to take it out of the coat. Fetch it, one of you. It is in the breast-pocket."

Mrs. Halliwell went back to the house, but Rebecca Copp laid her hand upon her brother's shoulder.

"James, pray heed me for once. Do not go to-day. Stop at home, and go another day."

"In the name of wonder, what for?" demanded Major Halliwell. "I shall be in time."

"*Don't you see how everything is contributing to keep you here?* It is already past eleven, *and you have been hindered going.* Pray heed it."

"I never heard such rubbish in my life," cried the Major, almost irritably. "It is only fit to tell to a child."

"It is not rubbish," earnestly persisted Aunt Copp. "There was a ship, the *Whirlpool*, started from the London Docks. Before she was well out of dock an accident happened to her rudder, and she had to put back for repair. Then she made a second start, dropped down to Gravesend, and went on. Before she reached Ramsgate a squall overtook her, damaged her rigging, and she had to put in there. Well, that was remedied, but it kept them three days—James, do listen; what's the use of being impatient? Away went the *Whirlpool* again, and reached Portsmouth, when it was discovered that an infectious fever had broken out on board. The passengers left the ship, she was fumigated, and in a few months' time, many of them, not all, came on board again. *Not one* had died of the fever, but some of them had taken warning, and they said good-bye for ever to the *Whirlpool*. When she was ready for the start, our ship was lying alongside of her. My husband said to the captain, 'Wilson, you'll never get her safe to the other side.' 'I have my doubts I sha'n't,' answered Captain Wilson, 'it has been a bad beginning. Farewell, old comrade; we'll shake hands hearty, though it should be for the last time.' And it was the last, James," added Mrs. Copp solemnly; "the *Whirlpool* started on her voyage, and she never was heard of again."

Hester had drawn near and was listening, and Mrs. Halliwell now

came running with the pocket-book. The Major snatched it from her. "Thank you, Jane," he said; "I must run for it."

He started off, but Mrs. Copp flew after him. "Major! James! for goodness' sake," she said, "don't go to-day; everything is against you. I could tell you many similar instances. The *Whirlpool* is only one amongst——"

"*Whirlpool* be hanged!" interrupted the Major. "I am not a sailor, Becky. Let go my coat-tails, or you'll have a fracture in them. The coach is waiting for me."

"A wilful man must have his way," cried Aunt Copp, wrathfully. "Something will go wrong with him to-day, as sure as his name is James Halliwell. He will lose his pocket-book and all his money, or meet with some bad news in town, or make some fresh acquaintance that will lead to ill. It will be something. I know he ought not to have gone the journey. Come along, Hester; no good looking after him."

Aunt Copp returned towards the house as she spoke, and Hester slowly followed her. Presently, when they were seated at work, Alfred came running up the path, apparently in the height of enjoyment.

"You would have split your sides with laughing," he cried, springing to the window, "if you had seen the governor just now. When he got back, the coach was gone."

"Gone!" interrupted Aunt Copp.

"It was gone, and round the corner, and out of sight. So the Major was in a fix, and began calling the coachman unorthodox names. The butcher was standing at Gibbons's with his light cart, and he proposed to the Major to get in and they'd gallop on and catch it; and up he climbed, and off they went, I hanging on behind to see the fun. You should have heard us all halloaing when we came in view of the Harkaway."

"Did you catch it?"

"It pulled up when it heard the row behind, and stopped for us. Jones was full of apologies, saying he had understood when Major Halliwell went off home the second time that he declined his place for that day. Wasn't the race fun!" added Alfred, swaying about with laughter. "I wish you had seen it."

"Then he is really gone."

"Oh, yes, he is gone. Wells had possession of the box-seat, but he got out of it for the governor."

"Now I just ask you, Mrs. Halliwell, whether it does not seem that the Major *was not* to go?" demanded Aunt Copp, with emphasis. "Was not everything against it?"

"It does seem so," said Hester, looking up from her work, with a grave face. But Mrs. Halliwell only smiled, and Alfred ran off, saying something that they only half caught, about the superstitions of salt water.

CHAPTER III.

THE END OF THE DAY.

THE day went on to evening. At half-past eight, the servant came in to lay the cloth for supper, that things might be in readiness for the Major and the oysters. Mary, of course, was in bed, and Lucy also went, for she had a bad headache, to which she was subject. Alfred had been out fishing, and was spending the evening at the house of one of his companions.

"What time do you say the coach gets in here?" demanded Aunt Copp.

"At a quarter to nine. And it never varies five minutes," said Mrs. Halliwell. "The Harkaway is the fastest coach we have, and the most regular. Of course, excepting the mail."

"It may be a little behind to-night, ma'am," remarked John, "as it will have a heavy load. So many folks will be a-coming down to the fair."

"I suppose they will," answered his mistress.

"I was with you here at fair-time four years ago," observed Mrs. Copp, "and left the following day. Do you remember it?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Halliwell. "And poor little Frederick got the ring of a penny candlestick on his finger, and could not get it off again. Do you know, Rebecca, that finger was bad for four or five weeks. The ring had cut into the flesh, and I suppose, poisoned it. I cannot think why they persist in holding this fair every September at Seaford. Little or no business is done at it, and it is only a resort for the idle. They have talked of doing away with it."

"Doing away with the fair, mamma!" exclaimed Hester. "I hope not. What would become of our prospect of fairings?"

The time went on to nine, and the Major had not arrived, and it went on again till half-past.

"How late it will be for supper!" exclaimed Aunt Copp. "Especially if we wait for the oysters to be opened."

"I think it will be better to take our supper at once of the cold beef, and not have the oysters till to-morrow."

"Decidedly best," said Aunt Copp. "I'll ring for John to draw the ale."

John brought it in, and they sat down to supper. "Where's Hester, I wonder?" cried Mrs. Halliwell.

"She's standing at the hall door, ma'am," said John.

"Call her."

He went out and came back again. "Miss Hester says she don't want any supper, ma'am. I think she's listening for the coach."

"Rebecca," said Mrs. Halliwell, as the man left the room, "you have frightened Hester."

"Frightened her!"

"Prophesying ill-luck to her papa to-day. You don't know how sensitive she is."

"Not she," answered Aunt Copp; "she is too sensible a girl to be sensitive. She has double the sense that most girls have."

"Yes, she has; but she is wonderfully sensitive with it. She has so much delicacy of feeling—so much imagination. I am sure, if you could lay your hand on her heart now, you would feel it going pit-a-pat at a great rate; and it will not cease till she sees her papa safe at home again."

Aunt Copp went to the dining-room door. "Hester."

Hester came in. "Who called me?" she asked.

"What are you doing there, my dear?"

"Oh, nothing, Aunt Copp."

"You are listening for the coach, Hester," said her mother.

The colour flushed into Hester's cheeks. "It is sure not to be long now, mamma."

"What a ridiculous idea of yours, Hester, to be standing there!" cried Aunt Copp. "As if you could hear the coach come up to the Wheatsheaf, all this way off."

"We do hear it, aunt, on a still night. And if the guard blows his horn, as he generally does, we can hear that in this room."

"Sit down, Hester," said Mrs. Halliwell, "and take your supper."

"Mamma, I cannot eat, thank you. I am not hungry."

"Sit down and take your supper," added Aunt Copp, peremptorily. "What's the good of your fretting yourself to fiddlestrings over that coach? It will come in all right. This beef is excellent."

Hester sat down and tried to eat, but she could not: she was "not hungry." This was just Hester: if anything troubled her she could never eat: outwardly silent, inwardly agitated. Mrs. Halliwell glanced at her, and then across the table at Aunt Copp. The latter was looking at Hester.

"Leave it, leave it," said Mrs. Halliwell. "I see you do not want it." And Hester, with a sigh of relief, laid down her knife and fork.

Mrs. Halliwell and her sister-in-law talked on cheerfully; first one topic was started, then another; *their* minds were evidently at rest. Aunt Copp seemed to have forgotten her sombre prognostications of the morning, and Mrs. Halliwell had never had any. The clock was striking ten when a footstep was heard outside, on the gravel.

"Here he is!" triumphantly exclaimed Aunt Copp.

"That is Alfred's footstep," dissented Hester. "It is too light and quick for papa's. How fast he is running!"

Alfred burst into the room. "Mother! Aunt Copp! they are saying that something is amiss with the Harkaway."

"What is amiss with it?"

"No one seems to know. I only heard a word, and came on to tell you."

"It 's upset for a guinea!" cried Aunt Copp, "and he'll come home with his arm in a sling. He will believe me another time. Just look at Hester! If ever I saw such a girl!"

Hester's face had turned white and rigid. She stood with her hands pressed upon her chest. But she spoke calmly.

"Mamma, I should like to go and hear what it is. Anything is better than suspense. Let me."

"I'll go too," said Aunt Copp. "Where's that shawl I had on in the garden? Oh, here. Hester, here's your mamma's. Throw it over your shoulders."

They went rapidly down the walk, Alfred with them. Aunt Copp talked incessantly, but Hester never spoke. Before the Wheatsheaf inn five or six persons were gathered. Aunt Copp marched into the midst of them. "How d'ye do, Mr. Gibbons? Has anything happened to the Harkaway?

"Your servant, ma'am," answered the landlord. "We are afraid there has."

"Then you don't know it?"

"Ma'am, we have not heard anything; but the Harkaway never was an hour behind time before."

"I never knew it more than ten minutes out since it took to run," added the landlady, who wore a smart cap, with blue ribbons. "Jones is the best time-keeper on the road. There's one thing to be said—he is sure to have a good load to-night."

"He wouldn't be an hour out of his time for any load as ever went on the coach, he wouldn't," said the landlord.

"Will you please to walk into our private parlour, and sit down, ladies?" asked Mrs. Gibbons. "You are waiting for the Major?"

"I don't know but I will," said Aunt Copp, to whom all places were alike. "He——"

"Here it comes," interrupted one of the group.

"No it don't," said the landlord, putting down his ear, "that ain't the rattle of the coach. It sounds more like Thorn's gig."

"Where's Thorn gone to to-day?" asked a spectator.

"Went over to Crummerton this afternoon, to look at some stock," chimed in the ostler.

A gig came rattling up to them, and pulled up. It contained Farmer Thorn and his bailiff. The landlord advanced before the farmer had time to speak.

"I say, Mr. Thorn, have you seen or heard aught of the Harkaway?"

"Yes, heard rather too much. Two glasses of ale, Mrs. Gibbons, please. It has met with a nasty accident."

"What accident?" roared a chorus of voices, Aunt Copp's the loudest.

"It was overturned coming down Crummerton Hill. Nobody but a fool-hardy man would have loaded it as Jones did to-night. He

kept taking up on the road, and taking up, till they say he had six and twenty there, inside and out, and a dreadful heap of luggage. I say he must have been making free with the tap. It was the weight that caused the accident; the horses could not bear up against it."

"What damage is done?"

"Well, some of the passengers are not hurt at all, and some, they say, are hurt badly. We drove up about five minutes after it had happened, and came on as quickly as we could to send Davis."

"Is he gone?"

Mr. Thorn nodded. "They had one doctor there, but the landlady was crying out for more, so I came and packed off Davis at once."

Hester stepped forward, speaking calmly. "Mr. Thorn, do you happen to know whether papa was one of those hurt?"

Mr. Thorn, who was raising his ale to his lips, paused and looked at her.

"Why—is not that one of the Miss Halliwells?"

"Yes," answered Hester.

"My dear, I never saw your papa. I did not know he was there."

"I don't think as the Major was there," interposed the bluff voice of the bailiff. "I never see him nor heered his name."

"He was sure to be there," said the landlord. "He took his place this morning to come back to-night."

"Did you see all the passengers?" enquired Alfred.

"No," said the farmer. "Three or four, that were badly hurt, they had carried in before we came up. One had his leg broken, they said, and Jones was insensible. The guard has got off scot free. Some of the passengers are on the road, walking on here."

Mr. Thorn handed back his glass, his bailiff did the same, and they drove on; but the farmer checked his horse suddenly, and called for Miss Halliwell.

"Don't alarm yourself, my dear," he said, in a kindly tone. "There are no lives lost. Remember that."

Aunt Copp would have stopped gossipping all night, waiting for the passengers, who were advertised as being on the road; but Hester, who was shivering inwardly, drew her away.

"Aunt, I shall go on to Crummerton," she whispered.

"Nonsense, Hester!"

"I do not want you to go with me. I am not afraid of lonely roads to-night."

"It's three miles off," retorted Aunt Copp, "and not a single roadside house between here and there. The passengers will be up directly, Hester: you heard that man in the gig say they were coming. I daresay your papa will be one of them. He is an old soldier and does not care for trifles."

"He said papa was *not* one of them," she answered. "Perhaps

—perhaps—he may be one of those badly hurt. Oh, aunt! perhaps he may be dying!"

Aunt Copp was silent for a minute. "It may be as well to go," she said. "I have no bonnet, but my cap is pretty thick, and the night is warm. Alfred, run and tell your mamma what we have heard."

"I am going to Crummerton," answered Alfred.

"Now that's just because we are," irascibly cried Aunt Copp. "You know how impatiently your mother is waiting for news. We were to tell her the instant we knew anything."

"I did not know you were going to Crummerton," returned Alfred. "I shall go."

"Well, run home first. Your long legs will soon catch us up. When your mother knows, she can do as she likes about following. Tell her the man in the gig did not hear your papa mentioned, so we are hoping he stopped in London."

It was a starlight night, and Mrs. Copp and Hester walked on without meeting a soul. About a mile beyond Seaford, they met a labouring man, running fast, who stared as he came up to them, but did not stop.

"Where are you going to?" demanded Aunt Copp. "What do you want?"

"What's that to you?" returned the man. "Mind your own business."

"Well, I'm sure!" ejaculated Aunt Copp. "You might keep a civil tongue in your head when a lady speaks to you."

"A lady!—Oh!" was the rejoinder. "I should say as it's civil enough for two tramps, as is abroad without their bonnets, at night-time."

"Two tramps! Hester, did you hear that? Your papa shall have him put in the stocks to-morrow. Do you know the fellow?"

Hester stepped before her aunt. Girl as she was, agitated as she was, she possessed far more common sense. "Wait one instant," she said to the man; "I think you are John Cooper. You came to make hay this summer at Major Halliwell's."

"What if I did?" he returned.

"I am Miss Halliwell."

The man peered at her in the dusk.

"Papa—Major Halliwell—was coming home to-night on the Harkaway, and an accident has happened to it at Crummerton. We thought you might be running to get assistance for the passengers."

"Miss," said the man, taking off his hat, "I am sorry to have spoke so, and I ask your pardon. I never thought it could be ladies, and——"

"That is nothing," interrupted Hester; "you could not know us, of course. Were you going to Seaford for assistance?"

"I have not heered nothing about it, miss. My wife is took bad to-night, and I was a-running for the parish doctor."

"Oh, then we will not keep you. Good-night."

"That's so much time lost," said Aunt Copp. "What a bear of a man!"

They sped on again. Now a high hedge was passed, now the turning to a lane, now a bit of darksome road, where the trees met overhead. Alfred did not overtake them, and soon the sound of voices was heard.

"What can this be?" whispered Aunt Copp.

Hester did not need to echo it; her beating heart had told her. A turning in the road brought them in view of three men and a woman. Their eager eyes saw that Major Halliwell was not one of them.

"You are some of the passengers by the Harkaway," said Aunt Copp, meeting them. "Do you happen to know whether Major Halliwell was on it?"

They were all strangers and did not know Major Halliwell, so could not answer the question.

"A merry gentleman with a bald head," said Aunt Copp. "Plum-coloured coat, and had a barrel of oysters with him."

"There was a barrel of oysters on the coach," cried the woman. "My elbow was sore with leaning on it. We was so wedged in together, such a lot of us! It was a shame. The driver ought to be 'prisoned for taking up so many passengers. We might just as well have lost our lives as not."

"He would probably be sitting on the box seat," interposed Hester. "A gentleman of middle height and rather stout. Do you remember?"

"There was a gentleman something like that a-sitting by the coachman," observed one of the men. "He joked a good deal. I think he was one of those hurt and carried in."

They went on again. More hedges, more trees, more vistas of lonely lanes, and more dark night. Other voices were heard now, five or six more of the passengers. Hester recognised one and sprang towards him. It was the gamekeeper at Seaford Park: the servant left in charge, with his wife, during the Earl of Seaford's absence abroad.

"Wells," she said, "is papa hurt?"

"I'm afeared he is, miss," returned the man. "He were in front with Jones, and were throwed right off, they say on his head."

"Was he sensible?" enquired Aunt Copp.

"Not yet, ma'am. I was a-bringing you word, now, of the accident. The guard asked me to call with the news."

Hester strove to speak, but her pale lips refused, at first, to utter a sound. "Who is with him, Wells?"

"There was several hurt, miss, and two doctors is with them. Mr. Davis is one."

On they went again, and came near to Crummerton. It was not a village. A few farm-houses were scattered in it far apart, and one public-house lay by the roadside about half-way up the hill. A long

steep, winding hill, dangerous at all times, but especially so for a coach too heavily laden. Mrs. Copp and Hester began to ascend it, in silence. As they neared the public-house, Hester went to the opposite side and looked up at the windows. A light was burning in every room ; but that told her nothing.

"Take care, Hester," called out her aunt. "You'll be run over."

A post-chaise had come from the direction of Seaford, very quickly. The post-boy whipped up his horses and would not let them slacken at the hill. It drew up at the inn door, and Hester recognised it as coming from the Seaford Arms.

"Hester," exclaimed Aunt Copp, "I do believe it is your mamma."

It was ; and Alfred. The four entered the house together, and the first person they saw was Mr. Davis. He took Mrs. Halliwell's hand in silence. Hester glanced at the expression of his face, and her heart sank within her.

He led them into the room. Oh, what a scene it was! Major Halliwell was laid on the bed, not dead, but dying. He had never moved since the accident. He never would move again.

"Is there any chance of his life?" whispered Aunt Copp to Mr. Davis.

"None. By morning he will be gone. The skull is fractured."

"The Lord forgive him!" wailed Aunt Copp, as she sat down on a low stool and burst into tears. "And he would not heed me!"

The funeral was attended by half Seaford. The body had been taken home, after the inquest, and from thence it was buried. Not only was Major Halliwell universally respected, but the circumstances of his death excited wide sympathy ; and thus, the village, unasked, followed his remains. The other passengers were recovering ; even Jones, the coachman, was progressing favourably. The family were together the evening of the funeral, all excepting Jane ; she, poor thing, had sailed and knew nothing of the accident. A relative of the Major's, a Mr. Halliwell from Middlebury, a town situated towards the west of England, who had arrived for the funeral, was with them.

"I wish you could manage to remain a few days with us," Mrs. Halliwell was saying to him, in a tearful voice. "There are many matters to attend to, and I am quite ignorant of business."

"I should only be too glad to do so, if it were possible," replied Mr. Halliwell. "But my late harvest is not in, and I have no one, just now, to overlook in my place. Dean, my manager and bailiff, died, as I told you, only a fortnight ago, and Tom is not old enough to be of any use. The very hour we have got it in, I will return here and render you any service in my power."

"There is one thing we seem to have forgotten," cried Aunt Copp, looking at her sister-in-law—"the will. Of course James made one."

"Oh, yes, he made a will," answered Mrs. Halliwell. "I daresay it is in his bureau, with his private papers."

"I think it should be searched for," said Mr. Halliwell, "and read."

They rose and went upstairs, Mrs. Halliwell, her son, Aunt Copp, and their relative; leaving Hester, Lucy, and the little girl in the sitting-room. Melancholy enough they looked, poor children, in their deep mourning. Hester had felt the shocking blow, perhaps, more than all, yet she had retained the calmest exterior. She was leaning now with her head on her hand, a contraction of pain on her brow.

"What would be the consequence if papa had not made a will?" inquired Lucy.

"Very little, I should think," was the abstracted reply of Hester. "I don't know what the law may empower in such a case, but I am sure none of us would take advantage one over the other."

Lucy looked up in surprise. "What advantage could we take? I do not understand."

The rest entered as she spoke, for the will had been speedily found. Mr. Halliwell proceeded to read it.

"This was made six years ago," said he, running his eyes over the date. "I suppose there is no later one."

"That is the last," said Mrs. Halliwell.

It was a perfectly just will, the will of an upright man. His wife's life was provided for, and his children were left an equal share, not one more than the other. Mr. Halliwell, as he folded it up, remarked that it was a just will.

"Of course," began Aunt Copp, "the first thing will be to withdraw the money from that fire company, and put it in the funds again."

"Yes," said Mrs. Halliwell, "I should wish it done."

"What are you talking of?" inquired Mr. Halliwell.

"Oh—long since that will was made, my brother drew out his money and invested it in some fire-insurance company," replied Aunt Copp; and her slighting tone appeared to almost cast reflection on the dead.

"All of it?"

"Every shilling. Except what was settled on the girls, which he couldn't touch: the two thousand pounds. Five hundred apiece, it will be, as Frances is dead, and there are only four of them."

"That comes to them at Mrs. Halliwell's death," observed Mr. Halliwell.

"Of course, at Mrs. Halliwell's death; not before," returned Aunt Copp. "Well, every shilling but that is in the fire company."

"It is quite safe," spoke up Mrs. Halliwell, "and pays an excellent interest. Since it has been there our income has been half as large again."

"I do not like these sort of speculations," observed Mr. Halliwell.

"I hate them," added Aunt Copp.

"I would advise you to write to your lawyer immediately," he

resumed to Mrs. Halliwell, "and let him give notice of the intended withdrawal of the money."

"I will," concluded Mrs. Halliwell.

Not one letter, but several, had to pass between the lawyer and Mrs. Halliwell. Fears were aroused. Something was wrong about the money or the company, and the lawyer could get at nothing satisfactory. Alfred went to London, Mrs. Halliwell went to London, Aunt Copp went to London, and they had to return as they went. In a few weeks, when Mr. Halliwell again visited them, the worst was known.

"It's all gone," was Aunt Copp's shrieking salutation to him when he entered the house.

"So you wrote me word," he answered, with a long face. "Can nothing be drawn out of the wreck?—absolutely nothing?"

"Not the ghost of a sixpence," sobbed Aunt Copp; "the company has gone and made itself a bankrupt, and a pretty state of things has come to light. Why, they have been going on, all the while, on nothing but credit—and the Major's money! How he could have been so taken in, I can't think. A poor, credulous—— However, he is an angel now, so don't let us talk about it."

"Aunt Copp," said Hester, bursting into tears, "I cannot bear to hear you blame papa. He did it for the best."

"And a fine best it has turned out," said Aunt Copp snappishly. "He always was a simpleton—don't frown, Hester. You cannot excuse such imprudence. What do you suppose is to become of you all?"

"We must try and support ourselves," answered Hester. "I must, I mean; Lucy and Mary are not old enough."

"Support a fiddlestick!" retorted Aunt Copp. "What are you all to live upon?—air? How is your mamma to keep house? How is Alfred to go to college?"

Hester put her hand to her brow.

"I do not see Mrs. Halliwell," interrupted their guest; "where is she?"

"In her bed, of course," answered Aunt Copp; "and no wonder, after such a blow. Some people would have had an apoplectic fit. Alfred is up in London again, but his going is of no earthly use. What assets do you suppose this precious company confessed to having, all told?"

"I don't know."

"One pound, seventeen shillings, and threepence farthing."

"They ought to be punished, those who have had the management of it," returned Mr. Halliwell.

"Punished!" echoed Aunt Copp. "I should like to see them all hanging from our yard arm."

"Had the Major any debts?"

"Oh, no, thank goodness—nothing of that sort."

"And there is positively nothing left but that two thousand pounds settled on the girls?"

"Nothing else, except the furniture of this house, which is very old-fashioned. There may be a balance of a hundred pounds or so at the banker's, after the funeral expenses shall have been paid."

"It is a very gloomy prospect," observed Mr. Halliwell. "Mrs. Halliwell cannot exist and keep the children upon the interest of two thousand pounds."

"Of course she can't, any more than I could steer our ship without a compass. Mark me, girls," added Aunt Copp, turning to her nieces, "you must make up your minds to years of struggle—if not to a life of it. I told your poor papa that when a man wilfully and recklessly risked his money, punishment was sure to follow. The Major had a comfortable income, but he grew dissatisfied, and thought he would speculate. There were two prospects before him: the one of undue wealth, gained quickly—more wealth than he could want; the other, the loss of all he had, and ruin to his family. His eyes were fixed upon the wealth, and he forgot the risk—and so the loss has come. Now, my dear children, such recklessness must be worked out; it is the natural—ay, and the divine—order of things, that wrong and reckless doing must bring its consequences after it. Your poor, ill-judging papa has gone, and upon you, through life, will these consequences fall."

In a little time, however, things looked brighter. Not that there was any prospect of the recovery of the money; that was irrevocably gone. Many years before, Major Halliwell had rendered a most essential service to the East India Company. He had not served under them, but it had fallen into his power to give them certain information of a valuable nature, and when they would have rewarded him he refused it. They communicated now with Mrs. Halliwell, and delicately informed her that a pension of two hundred a-year would be paid her as long as she should live. Whether this was the private act of some two or three individuals, or whether it emanated from the Company, Mrs. Halliwell never knew. She thought the former, especially as her husband had been, up to the time of his death, upon terms of intimate friendship with two of its members. The news was a great relief to all; but upon none did it act as it did on Aunt Copp. Her spirits went up like mercury, and she began to contrive and plan; saying she would see them all straight and settled before she left.

"Let me see," said she: "you will have about two hundred and seventy pounds a-year. Well, you may live beautifully on that."

"Compared with what we feared we might have to exist upon," said Mrs. Halliwell. "We may think now of Mr. Halliwell's generous offer to Alfred."

"What was that?" quickly asked Aunt Copp.

"I did not mention it; it appeared so impossible that we could avail ourselves of it. I was speaking of Alfred's great disappointment at not being able to return to Oxford, and Mr. Halliwell generously said that if there were a possibility of one-half being contributed towards his return, he would find the other half. So now, with some pinching at home, children," she added to her daughters, "Alfred may keep his terms."

"Oh, mamma, cried Hester, her face in a glow, "let us live upon bread-and-cheese, pinch in any way, so that Alfred may succeed. His heart is set upon being a clergyman."

"I think my favourite theory, my trust, my belief, better than yours, Rebecca," said Mrs. Halliwell.

"What is that?"

"That God takes care of the widow and the orphan. See how merciful He has been to us! You would contend that their father's risking his money must entail punishment on the children."

"I did not say they would be crushed by it," rapidly responded Aunt Copp. "Never thought of such a thing: never would believe such a thing. God takes better care of us all than we deserve. I said that reckless acting of James's would entail struggles and difficulties upon the children. And I know it will do so. It *must* work out its own retribution."

"The first thing to be done is to look out for a small house," resumed Mrs. Halliwell, leaving the subject. "We must quit this one."

"There's one at the Seaford end of the village that will just suit," cried Aunt Copp.

Seaford was a straggling parish, not very populous. People had fallen into the habit of calling only one end of the parish Seaford, and the other St. Jude's, because the new church, St. Jude's, was situated there.

"How do you know there is?" asked Mrs. Halliwell.

"Because I knew you must leave this, and have been keeping my eyes open. The rent is twenty-five pounds, and it's a nice genteel house, fit for a gentleman's family whose means are limited. The back windows open on a lovely little lawn and flower beds, and there's a serviceable kitchen garden beyond."

"I think Aunt Copp must mean Seaford Cottage," suggested Hester.

"Seaford Cottage; that's the very name. Won't it do, Mrs. Halliwell?"

"I really think it might," answered Mrs. Halliwell. "I did not know it was to let."

"Ah! what would you do without me?" cried Aunt Copp. "If you take it, I'll stay with you till I have moved you into it, for you'd never get in without me. You are all the greatest set of incapables at business —except, perhaps, Hester; and she has had no experience. And

now I'll tell you what I have had running in my head. We shall be away about ten months this next voyage; let me take Mary with me. I'd say Lucy, but I think she'd better finish up her education; she does not know of what use it may be to her; and Hester you'll want for sewing and household matters. You'll find enough to do, I can tell you, with only one servant. It would be a change for Mary, and during that time she would be no expense to you for clothes or anything."

"You are extremely kind, Rebecca," said Mrs. Halliwell, with a smile; "but a ship is not a fit place for a little girl. She would learn the ways of the sailors."

"And to swear, perhaps," added Lucy, "as our cousin Sam has learnt."

Aunt Copp was exceedingly nettled. "Do you think I can't take care of a child? I should not let her go climbing up the ropes, and mixing with the sailors, as Sam did."

"I think I must keep Mary at home," said Mrs. Halliwell, in her quiet way. "I could not part with her just now."

"You don't know what's good for her," returned Aunt Copp; "she is delicate, and a sea voyage would set her up for good. But as you please."

Seaford Cottage proved suitable, and Aunt Copp "settled them" in it before she left. In her own opinion, it was she who did everything; but the quiet usefulness and plain good sense of Hester effected more than she did. It appeared as if Hester had been made for usefulness. She had shown no turn for accomplishments. Music they tried her with, a quarter of a year, but she made nothing of it. A taste for drawing she certainly had, but somehow she was never taught; it must be remembered that accomplishments, in those days, were as rare as they are common now. Lucy's education was being conducted on a higher scale. But Hester was great in domestic qualities—her comfortable economy, her clever needle, and above all, her aptitude in a sick room! Aunt Copp watched her with admiration, and gave her her meed of praise when she was leaving.

"I told you, you'd be nothing but an old maid, my dear; but never mind, you will still be happy. A useful life brings its own satisfaction with it—and that's what your life will be."

(To be continued.)

THIRD CLASS.

By An Elderly Lady.

WHEN I was young I travelled third class from motives of economy, but promised myself promotion when my ship should come in.

I now think, that even if that long-delayed vessel came to port, I should remain faithful to the third class railway carriage. It is one of the few places in this country of castes and cliques, where you meet your fellow-creatures spon a footing of equality; and so great is the virtue of equality in social intercourse that nowhere can you find better company than in third class carriages.

I do not mean by this that they are frequented by persons of rank and fashion, though there is a popular legend of a third class passenger who travelled to the North in the company of two dukes.

The story goes that the three travellers were alone in their compartment, and beguiled their way with friendly talk. A little on this side of the Tweed, one of the passengers got out, to be met by a liveried servant, and addressed as "Your Grace."

"Only think of a nob like that talking to two snobs like you and me!" observed the third class passenger to the remaining duke; and they resumed their talk, till they had gone some little way on the further side of the Tweed. Here, the second duke got out, to be met by a second servant, and also to be addressed as "Your Grace."

The story stops at this interesting point; but it is believed that the third class passenger survived to tell the tale.

I do not think I ever travelled with a duke, though I should be loth to declare on oath that I had never travelled with an earl or a baronet. But, if I did, I remained unaware of my privileges, owing to an unworthy reserve, which showed they were little better than impostors in coming into a third class carriage.

Nor have I ever met with the adventures which have fallen to the lot of some of my acquaintances.

One dear young friend of mine, when only lately married herself, was escorting a still younger sister on a railway journey. She was feeling elevated at her recently-acquired dignity of chaperon, when her pride received a severe shock from the conduct of their sole fellow-passenger, who proceeded to make a formal offer of his hand and heart to the younger lady, with sublime indifference to the presence of her guardian. The fellow-passenger, of course, proved to be an escaped lunatic.

None of these adventures, however, have fallen to my lot; probably,

because I am not adventurous. Also my appearance, which is respectable, and, I trust, benign, is rather calculated to attract the timid female than gay gallants, lunatics, or giddy girls. In fact, I seldom seat myself in a railway carriage and show my face at the window, without its being promptly besieged by timid and unprotected women.

The very guards themselves discover me at once, and open my door for nervous passengers, with the remark—

"Here, ma'am, here's a lady in this carriage."

Of course, with such fellow-passengers, one is not likely to meet with adventures, but there can be plenty of amusement without them.

Colonials, come to visit the mother country, are some of the most interesting of the third-class passengers, and they are generally delighted to give you their experiences. You may get as much information out of an Australian squatter or Canadian farmer between London and Red-Hill, as you will find in a bulky volume of travels from Mudie's Library.

Another pleasant feature of third class travelling is the kindness shown to children.

If you have the misfortune to be travelling with little children in a first or second class carriage, your fellow-travellers are apt to glare at you, as though a baby were an indecent exhibition; and nothing but the impossibility of finding a seat elsewhere, will induce the first class Englishman to remain in a carriage which is desecrated by the presence of a fellow-creature under ten years of age.

In a third class carriage I have more than once seen a poor tired mother, with two or three infants, who could hardly have got through her journey but for the kindness of her fellow-passengers.

A woman with a baby appeals, more strongly than anything else, to the heart of a "third class" Englishman. At one time, when I was frequently travelling, at night, in the overcrowded trains on the underground railway, I sometimes saw young girls left to stand, while the men in the carriage remained seated; but I never saw a woman left standing with a baby. The roughest-looking men would rise, and with a friendly "Here, Missis!" give up their seats to the mother.

It is this general interest in one another's concerns which constitutes the greatest charm of third class travellers.

Some few months ago, I was travelling from London to Westermouth. It was the middle of the day, and I had just chosen a comfortable carriage (as near as I could get to the middle of the train) when, as usual, the timid females began to flock.

First, a sad-faced, middle-aged woman, silently took the seat opposite to mine; then a brisk little woman, who might have been fifty years of age, bustled in. She had bright, dark eyes, and delicate, waxen-looking features; but her breath was short, and she was struggling with her bundle; so I tossed it up on to the rack for her.

"Oh, dear, you are strong I couldn't do that, not if it were for

a gold watch," she exclaimed, as she settled herself down, and we watched for the next arrivals.

A pale-cheeked girl appeared at the door; she was in tears at parting from her friends, and there was some difficulty about an admission ticket, which seemed to be troubling her mind.

My bright-eyed friend took in the situation at a glance.

"Going to the Home?" she inquired.

The girl assented.

"Oh, you'll be all right, bless you. I dare say the Sisters will keep you to the last, but they'll be sure to take you in."

"Are you going to the Home?" asked the girl.

Yes, the bright-eyed woman was going, and had been there before and so had the sad-faced woman opposite to me.

Presently a rosy-cheeked girl dropped in upon us; she also took a subdued leave of her friends, and gave out that she was going to the Home.

Next, a young, married woman came in, followed by her husband. She, too, was in tears, and the man's face worked as he pressed her closely in a farewell embrace; and then he left the carriage, telling her to take care of herself, and be sure and let him know how she was, when she got to the Home.

"What! are you going to the Home, too?" asked the bright-eyed woman; and the poor young thing replied that she was.

"One, two, three, four, five," counted the bright-eyed one.

"Why! here's another one," she added, as the guard opened the door, and put in a shy-looking girl, with the remark that here was one more, and they could all travel down together.

My curiosity was roused by this time, and my opposite neighbour explained that they were all bound for a convalescent home at Westermouth, for which the railway company issued cheap fares. Their meeting was purely accidental, and they had never seen each other before.

Had we been anything but third class passengers, we might have travelled in stony silence to Westermouth, and waited to know each other till we had been introduced.

As it was, being only third class people, with the comfortable knowledge that, "He that is down need fear no fall," we promptly made friends with each other.

We shared our sandwiches and our biscuits, we confided our respective maladies, getting advice, or at least sympathy, in return; we exchanged little autobiographies; and, at the end of half-an-hour, the sad-faced woman began to look cheerful, and the shy girl took courage; the weeping ones had dried their tears, and my bright-eyed, but breathless friend had established over us the ascendancy of a superior mind; leading the conversation with a vivacity worthy of a Frenchwoman, and turning our third-class carriage into a "salon."

The conversation naturally turned upon the Home, for which they were all bound, an institution at Westermouth, managed by a Sisterhood.

I had often heard philanthropists give their opinions about "the poor," and was much interested in hearing "the poor" express their opinions about the philanthropists. Two or three of them having already visited the Home, it was satisfactory to hear that at Westermouth, at any rate, the Sisters were very kind. Other institutions were mentioned, where the Sisters were not always kind; but at Westermouth they seem to be, on that point, exemplary.

"And I don't mind their ceremonies," said the bright-eyed woman; who, by the way, was a washerwoman

"If you go to a place, you must mind the rules," rejoined my sad-faced neighbour, who told me she had been a lady's-maid

I ventured to inquire what were the ceremonies alluded to

The washerwoman explained them to consist chiefly in going to chapel on week-days, where high-church services were held, which did not meet with her approval. She considered, however, that they would "do her no harm" on week-days, provided she were allowed o go to her "own place of worship on the Sabbath."

I found this to be the view of most of my companions. They told me that the "ceremonies" enforced by the Sisters "would not hurt them," and were prepared to swallow them as cheerfully as if they had been homœopathic globules

But the real medicine for their souls was to be taken on Sundays, and, for this, they must go to their own places of worship. A good deal of anxiety was expressed upon this point, and it was hoped that Sister Mary, and not Sister Margaret, would be in authority—the former lady being more liberal in her views than the latter.

"And the men!" said the rosy-cheeked girl, "you must not speak to a man. They won't let you look at one—not even in church!"

The elders admonished her that church was not the place to look at "the men"; but they all agreed that a little male society would be harmless and agreeable at other times.

The Home for which they were bound received convalescents of both sexes; but they were kept apart as strictly as possible, to the mingled amusement and annoyance of my fellow-travellers.

Even the widowed washerwoman objected to the restriction, and seemed to think it the oddest of the many odd ways of the Sisters. She also intimated that human nature frequently got the better of surveillance; and remarked that the Sergeant who superintended the men "was always attentive to the women."

"Who shall guard the guards?" is the question in such cases.

I wondered how one would feel in such an institution. My chief experience of living in a community had been upon voyages to and from India. I tried to imagine a P. and O. steamer under the rule of the Sisters. Suppose a Sister Mary or Margaret in command of the passengers, and rigidly enforcing the separation of the sexes! The mind fails to grasp such a situation, and I cannot honestly say I ever saw any harm come from the lack of it.

It was edifying to observe the good-humoured tolerance with which the peculiarities of the Sisters were discussed.

Mr. Hardy, in portraying Wessex peasants, and Mr. Besant, in describing East-end artizans, are not more alive to the humours of their subjects than were these members of "the lower orders" when discussing their social superiors.

But it was pleasant to notice how the kindness of the Sisters was appreciated and dwelt upon. The washerwoman told us how they had been up with her at night when her breathing was bad; and she seemed genuinely distressed at the idea that they depended too much upon "good works," and might not, ultimately, be "saved."

The lady's maid replied that such good women were "saved" already; and we were soon in the thick of a theological argument, with texts falling amongst us like snow-flakes.

A halt at the half-way station checks the discussion, and a fresh passenger, a regular countrywoman, enters the carriage. She is less sociable than the Londoners, and looks at us with a little rustic scorn. The washerwoman tackles her at once.

"Going to the Home?"

Rather to my surprise, the countrywoman admits that she is, and is immediately hailed with a frank camaraderie which her country pride is unable to resist.

"We are all going to the Home," says the washerwoman; "all but that lady in the corner," nodding her head towards me. "And I wish she were coming to," she kindly adds: a wish which her companions echo with a friendly warmth which brings a blush to my elderly cheeks as I thank them for their good-will.

We travel on, quite a merry party. I can hardly believe these are the tearful women of two hours ago. The sad-faced lady's-maid brightens as she talks of former journeys and places abroad, which she has visited with her "ladies." She has retired from service now, and supports herself by needle-work. She can get as many orders as she can execute, chiefly babies' work, for which she is well paid. It is cheering nowadays to meet any woman who talks of having a sufficiency of well-paid work. Her eyes, however, are weak, and a former mistress is sending her to the Home. She had dreaded coming away and going amongst strangers, she tells us, but now she feels so glad she has ventured out among us—she positively looks better already.

The young married woman has a very different tale. She has never left her home before, and it is evidently a great trial to her to go away, but she is curious to see the sea, and her husband has told her to be sure to go out in a boat.

She is torn between her desire of pleasing her husband and a nervous dread of going upon the water. On her face one reads the signs of heart-disease with painful clearness, and we tell her she need not be afraid of going upon the water, as the doctor will never allow

her to venture. She cheers up at this, and looks as if a load were taken off her mind.

We reach the last station before Westermouth, and the collector comes up for our tickets. He exchanges a little friendly chaff with our party.

"There!" exclaims the pale-faced girl, regretfully, as he closes the door of our carriage, "that's the last man we shall speak to for a month."

For the next few minutes we busy ourselves in shaking out our skirts, we re-tie our bonnet strings, straighten our hats, and sort out our bundles. After three hours' intercourse, it seems a little sad to go upon our separate ways, and like Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress," to "see their faces no more."

But Westermouth platform is now beside us, and we bid each other a friendly good-bye. The little washerwoman grasps my hand, and fixes her bright eyes on mine, as she says :

"I hope I shall meet you again—in Heaven."

I hope she may.

SONNET.

Along the morning sky the Angel came,
And through the window like a sunbeam passed,
Silent and bright A startled look she cast
Upon his long white wings and brow of flame.
"Hail Mary, full of grace," said he. The name,
Like long-expected music come at last,
By earth was heard. But when with virgin shame
Pure Mary shrank beneath the Heavens vast,
All through the sad long suffering word there ran
A throb of fear and awe lest this poor maid
The great boon should deny to sinful man.
"Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she said.
Then gladness like a belt the earth did span :
The Angel smiled, and back to Heaven fled.

Julia Kavanagh

THE NIGHT BOAT FROM BOULOGNE.

By Esmè Stuart.

"MY dear fellow, you will do me a great service; indeed you will; and to know that the 'Kenite' is in your charge will be a weight off my mind. I hope that, as you will hand it over at once to M. Durand when you arrive in Paris, it will not spoil much of your holiday. I can imagine how you will enjoy showing your wife all the sights. It is really your honeymoon, as I could not spare you longer at Easter."

The speaker panted for a moment; then taking up a cheque from the table, went on more rapidly: "One thing more, Hulse. Do me the kindness to accept this cheque so that you may not feel in any way obliged to be stingy. Nonsense! Don't thank me. You know that if I could act alone, you would to-day be in a different position; but the firm moves slowly, and if this little commission turns out well I feel sure we shall soon see you figuring as 'Co.' to the firm of 'Milsom and Harris.' Well, that is settled and you start to-night. Don't let Mrs. Hulse tire herself out in the gay capital.—By the way, Hulse, shall you mention to your wife that you have the 'Kenite' in your possession?"

He who spoke was a white-haired man with a very benevolent expression of countenance, and the person addressed was a pleasant-looking young Englishman, with an earnest, trustworthy face, blue eyes, fair curling hair, fair moustache and a resolute square chin which spoke of determination. The elder man was Mr. Harris, a diamond merchant, and Frank Hulse had been for many years employed and trusted by the partners. Had he been possessed of capital he would already have been taken into partnership; but though Mr. Milsom was willing to do full justice to the value of their confidential clerk and traveller, yet it was quite another matter rewarding him for his faithful service. The question had been discussed, but was still very uncertain.

In the meanwhile Frank Hulse had not waited for uncertainties, but in spite of a small income he had married a wife. In his eyes, Janet was the most beautiful, the noblest, the cleverest and the best of her sex. So he did not hesitate as he answered the elder man.

"Indeed, Mr. Harris, I could trust any secret in Janet's safe keeping."

Mr. Harris waved his hand slightly as he smiled kindly. He was not going to discuss "Janet's" powers of keeping a secret.

"I only meant, Hulse, that some ladies are a little—— I mean sometimes they find it difficult to keep a secret; but you are the best

judge; I know that the 'Kenite' is safe with you, my dear fellow. I think M. Durand has made us a little over-anxious about this stone. However, no one knows its value better than you do, and I shall dismiss all anxiety from my mind. Telegraph directly you have handed over the stones into M. Durand's hands. Richards shall meet you at the station to-night with the jewels. They will all be carefully packed into an ordinary black hand-bag which will attract no special notice. You will of course not let it out of your sight. This is on the whole the safest course; luggage is sometimes tampered with. You know how to pass the Custom House officers. A handsome douceur makes them very civil in France. Good-bye, and mind you enjoy yourself. You deserve your holiday."

When Frank Hulse reached his lodgings no happier or prouder man could have been found in London; and when Janet, his wife, came eagerly to meet him, and, when the door was shut, helped to pull off his great coat, it was no wonder that he would not have changed places with the Prince of Wales or the Emperor of all the Russias.

"Are we really to go? Oh, Frank!"

"Yes, Janet; and that excellent Mr. Harris has been kindness itself. Have you all the things packed? Remember, we are going in grand style; this is a real honeymoon."

"It's always a honeymoon, Frank; it always will be; but now, no more talking. There's dinner waiting, and the last touches to your portmanteau; and —— Oh, I forgot! have you that precious 'Kenite?'" and Janet laughed in her clear silvery voice.

Frank was grave all at once.

"Janet, you know you must never even mention the word. Richards will bring the diamonds to meet us this evening. I told Mr. Harris I should tell you everything. Imagine his thinking you couldn't keep a secret!"

"I suppose Mrs. Harris can't," said Janet laughing. "She does not look as if she could."

After this remark, Mrs. Hulse, who looked almost too young to be a wife, went about her business with an air of importance suitable to the occasion of a first visit to the Continent. Life seemed almost too delightful, and Janet Hulse felt deeply grateful to the valuable diamond (known in the firm as the "Kenite," from the name of the mine where it was found), for being the cause of her and her husband's trip to Paris.

And so, the pair, having finished their preparations, started off to Charing Cross, and everything but the present enjoyment was put away from the young wife's mind as they steamed away towards Dover.

Frank Hulse, however, was a little anxious about the Kenite. The stone alone was worth £30,000; whilst the whole value of the stones committed to his charge was £95,000: a terrible responsibility! Not that for a moment he doubted his own cleverness, or had a shadow of fear that the precious black bag would cause him real anxiety;

still he could not feel quite free to enjoy himself till the valuables were safely lodged with the Frenchman. As the train sped onward, Frank Hulse felt that each minute was bringing him nearer to Paris, and, therefore, nearer to perfect rest and happiness.

It was a chilly October evening, and the happy pair managed to get into a carriage with only one other passenger, a stout lady, who slept soundly all the way to Dover, and who was, therefore, quite unmoved by the slight changes of the black bag. At first Frank placed it on his knee, but Janet intimated that this looked too much like telling the public that he was carrying something precious; so he deposited it just opposite to him, where both he and Janet could fix their eyes on it. As the old lady slept on till Dover was reached, their ceaseless watching was certainly wasted.

"Janet, you will look after the rugs and I will carry my bag," he whispered. "The crossing is so short that I think I shall stay on deck; it will be safer," he remarked.

"It is quite fine, Frank, so do let me stay with you," said Janet.

Frank remonstrated, saying it would be too cold; but Janet scorned the idea of cold as she wrapped her fur-lined cloak round her. They chose a comfortable and sheltered corner, and, putting the bag between them, talked happily of what they were going to do.

Janet was a good sailor, and did not refrain from pitying others less fortunate than herself; she felt proud, too, as several male passengers passed the pair, to see that they glanced at her with surprise. One man especially interested her; for as he courteously picked up her fallen umbrella, he remarked:

"I hope you are not feeling cold; there is a rug lying here which no one is using."

Frank Hulse answered for Janet; and, starting up, he thanked the stranger and fetched the rug himself. The black bag remained for a moment protected only by Janet, and when Frank returned to his place, he remembered this fact with a slight pinching of conscience, although, of course, the precious bag had been in no danger. The stranger, having seen the brave young lady provided with an extra wrap, raised his hat and walked away. Janet noticed that, as he passed under a light, the stranger had fair hair; she could not distinguish his features, but she was struck by the fact that there was a deep scar on his close shaven chin.

"What a civil man, Frank," said Janet, as she wrapped herself up; "and nice-looking, too."

"What a long-sighted mortal you must be! I really did not notice him. But do you know, Janet, I left this bag in your keeping for two minutes, and when I remembered this, I had a moment of anxiety. I promised never to let it out of my sight."

"So you don't trust me, Frank; that is an unexpected accusation. When you get to Paris, perhaps your good opinion of me will return."

The journey is not long across the channel, but the bustle at

Calais is considerable. Janet was too much excited to feel tired, and as she waited at the station she amused herself by looking about for the courteous gentleman on board; but though she scrutinised all the fair heads, she saw nothing at all like him. Evidently he was not going on to Paris.

There was much more crowding now than before, and Frank and his wife found that they had to share the carriage with four other persons. Two gentlemen and two ladies. One was the regular British father, taking his daughters to Paris; the other a dark-haired, dark-whiskered, middle-aged man, who was very much wrapped up, and entered immediately after them.

Janet decided that the party was uninteresting. The dark gentleman was sitting near the window in front of Frank, whilst Janet had the seat next to her husband. Again the black bag was between them, safe and barely visible.

Paris! Who does not know the pleasant sound of the word; the eager faces that look out of the train even before the big station is reached; the gathering up of wraps and umbrellas.

Three minutes before the arrival of the train the dark gentleman woke up and began making careful preparations. He opened the window and looked out knowingly, yawned, then looked out again.

"Good gracious!" he said in English, and speaking for the first time. "There's something on the line." Instantly the opposite window was let down by the British father, and Frank, seeing the dark man filling up the window space, took one stride across, and thrust his head out of the opposite window. His one idea was, "If there is a collision I must save Janet."

"Eh, eh?" said the anxious father. "What do you see?"

"It is all right," said Frank, hastily retiring; and in doing so he faced the dark man, who was sinking back into his place, whilst Janet, who had involuntarily followed her husband to the other side, laughed at the sudden collision of voices.

"There was a siding close by. I suppose you did not see it," said Frank, a little scornfully.

"No, upon my honour I didn't. Very sorry to have caused a fright to the ladies, but here we are at our destination."

Now followed a general packing up, and just as the train stopped, the dark gentleman opened the carriage door and jumped out.

Janet had not finished packing up her rugs, but Frank helped her with the straps.

"Take your bag; don't mind me. Is this really Paris?—And I'm not a bit tired," she said.

"Yes,—all right. You have the ticket for the luggage. Look here, Janet. We will leave our luggage and come for it later, and I'll just manage the officials as soon as possible, and get out of the station. I shall feel free afterwards. Come this way." They hurried on after the crowd, but instead of going to the waiting-room, passed

on through the station, where the official inquisitor's white chalk mark was required on every package.

"Madame has only these rugs," said Frank, calmly. "We shall go and look for an hotel and come back later for our luggage."

It was all very simple and natural, but the official was grumpy. Madame must undo all her rugs. Cigars had lately been largely smuggled, etc. Janet laughed and obeyed; then, after several minutes of useless unstrapping and strapping, she was chalked.

"Your bag, if you please, monsieur? Have you anything to declare?"

Frank had previously decided to make no opposition to a search, as this official was cantankerous. The boxes had been securely hidden by shirts and common articles, so he calmly handed the bag. There was no fear from such a man as this.

"The key, monsieur. Come, dépêchons nous."

Frank handed the key.

"Mais! What's this? It does not fit. Open it yourself."

Frank seized the bag. Richards had given him the key at the last moment. Could the fool have made a mistake?

No, it did not fit. Janet was bending over her wraps and did not notice her husband's face as Frank Hulse once more took the bag and tried the key. A sudden pallor overspread his features, his hand shook slightly as the impatient official called to another colleague and mentioned the difficulty.

"Well: how is this? Monsieur has another key?"

"No. This key must fit it."

"But it does not. Here, Pierre, it must be broken open."

Janet now took in the situation.

"How can there have been a mistake, Frank?" she whispered. And then noticing the curious expression on his face, she added:

"Must they open it? Pay them something."

The lock apparently was not complicated; in two seconds the man had opened it. There seemed a curious collection of small odds and ends; and in another moment the white chalk cross was scrawled over it, and it was handed back to its owner. Frank Hulse took it, and then said distinctly:

"I have something else—I must have left it in the carriage. I must go back to the train. Come, Janet."

"Indeed you have not, Frank. See, here are my rugs; and you know you said——"

She paused, for Frank took her arm and hurried her off.

"Oh, Frank, what is the matter? Are you——" Tears were in Janet's eyes as she followed her husband through a large and now deserted salle d'attente.

"Janet, the most terrible thing has happened to us. I am undone, ruined. I can hardly think but it is wisest to say nothing yet. This bag is not mine. When or how I know not, but the bag has been

changed; or else I——Do you understand, Janet? I have lost the diamonds."

Before Janet could answer, the British father and his two daughters came face to face with them.

"Sir, have you got my black bag? I missed it soon after I reached the hall where they crammed us in for a quarter of an hour. These foolish officials would hardly let me out to look for it, but—— Good heavens, here it is! Bella, this gentleman is bringing it back. It contains many useful things for ——"

"No, no," said Janet, seeing Frank said nothing and allowed the bag to be taken from him. "If this is your bag, please give us back ours. It is exactly like it certainly, but ——"

"My dear madam, I am sorry to say I did not take yours; it may still be in the train, though I own I could not find it. I wish I could stop to help in the search, but we are in a great hurry. Bella, my dear, make haste; this terrible place is so bewildering, and these parleyvous ——"

They were gone, and Frank and Janet stood silently looking at each other. Then a little sob from Janet told plainly how powerfully she too was affected.

"Frank dear, make haste; it *must* be in the train; how strange the two bags were so much alike! Of course ours is there. Do come back."

"Hush," said Frank, turning a face altered so terribly in its expression that Janet trembled at the sight; "I feel quite bewildered, but we must act cautiously. I—I ——"

Now the pair were stopped by another official.

"What does monsieur want? no one goes back into the station. A bag lost—exchanged? That's a pity; there is nothing in the train. Come this way to the office. Or wait—it must be in the Custom House."

Now followed a long and weary tramping from one large room to another, but all the search was to end in disappointment. At last, acting more as if he were in a dream, Frank, having given a description of the missing article in three separate places, slowly walked out of the station, handed his wife into a cab and ordered the man to drive to the Hôtel Beaumont. Janet, after the first sentence, had never uttered a word; she too felt crushed; the misfortune was really too great to be fully taken in.

The Hôtel Beaumont was near M. Durand's business place, which was in fact a flat in the Rue R——. Frank had already secured his rooms, and now he was going there simply to think over what he ought to do. Not a word was spoken on the way there, and when the landlord came forward Frank merely said that he and his wife wanted nothing, but would rest before ordering a meal.

At last the door was locked and for the first time Janet spoke. Her brown eyes seemed to express nothing but horror and misery,

and yet she longed for words with which to tell Frank of her intense sympathy.

"Frank, darling, how was it? It seems like witchcraft. Ought not we to do something, or go to the police? How was such a thing possible? When was the bag changed?"

"It is almost like witchcraft," said Frank, sinking down into a chair. "All this time I have been trying to make some plan and to form some idea of the extent of our misfortune. After much thought I am convinced the bag has been stolen. It was done so cleverly that the thief must be an experienced man. Janet, don't you see? the dark-haired man changed the bags in that instant of time that I looked out of the window. Strange that that old gentleman had one almost similar to mine!"

"He was an accomplice! Why did you not have him taken up?"

"Because I feel sure that he was not an accomplice. He is staying, I know, at the Hôtel Chatham, with his daughters. Besides, that bag contained genuine things. No, it was a horrible coincidence and the man took advantage of it. But anyhow he meant to rob me. He must somehow have learned the secret about the diamonds in town, and followed us."

Janet could not at once take in all the idea; she only realised fully that all their happy holiday was at an end; and worse; that most likely Frank would lose all chance of advancement and would almost certainly lose his present situation. Who would ever believe in such abominable craft and wickedness?

"Frank, let us do something. Hope is not over yet. Shall you go to M. Durand, or telegraph? But do wait a little while; we may find it and it may be all right. It *must* be." And in spite of her hopeful words Janet now broke down, as every moment seemed to make the misfortune greater.

"My idea is that the wretch will keep quiet here a few days, and that it will be safer not to acquaint the French police. How the fact of the diamonds being in that bag became known is a mystery to me, but I fear this must be the case. He followed me from London. Anyhow I am ruined, Janet." And in utter despair Frank Hulse hid his face in his arms. "If it were myself alone—but it is for your sake, Janet, that this seems so terrible."

"Don't say that," said Janet, all at once feeling strong because Frank wanted her help. "What does it matter about me? Frank, tell me what to do. What plan shall we follow? It is perhaps possible that ——"

"I seem to have turned over every plan already," interrupted Frank; "and the only one which approves itself to my mind is to return at once, this evening, in fact, to London, and tell Mr. Harris everything, and also put the English police on their guard. The Kenite cannot be sold at once; indeed it would be impossible to dispose of such a valuable stone. The smaller stones can be got rid

of here, but the thief will wait to do that, and then will most likely try to get back to England."

"Then we shall go back to-night. Why not before?"

"Because there is just a chance of the officials finding it. I will give them till the evening."

"Suppose they should come here to-morrow morning, and we were not here?" asked Janet, as she clasped her hands.

"I must go this evening. Mr. Harris will wonder at my silence as it is."

"Then, Frank, suppose I stay here, in case anything turns up? What's the good of having a wife, if she is not to be useful?"

"You, Janet! alone in a Paris hotel! No, no. I have already brought enough trouble upon you."

But Janet persisted.

"Frank, don't talk as if I were to be kept in cotton wool. I am determined I will stay here till I hear further from you. Let me see you off; that is all I ask; and I will come back straight here in a cab. How I shall hate the very idea of Paris in the future! Now, Frank, let us have some breakfast, and then go back to the station. It is too soon yet to despair."

It seemed at this moment as if Janet had the clearer brain of the two. The truth was that, having taken in her husband's plan, she determined to help it on. The realisation of his misfortune seemed almost too much for him, but his brave little wife would not despair, or rather would not allow despair to take possession of her.

Seeing Janet was not to be moved, Frank gave in, and with heavy hearts they began to prepare for further search and inquiry.

In vain; the time for the evening train to London saw Frank and his wife at the bustling station, and not a ray of hope was in their faces. Evidently the best chance was immediate return. The French police were warned, but they were a little sceptical about the bag having been taken, so little could the young Englishman describe the supposed thief. The dark hair and dark beard and whiskers was the only clue they had. Frank waited till he had seen Mr. Harris before setting French detectives to find the thief.

The train was off, and Janet Hulse turned back with a heavy heart, and went into the large waiting hall which in a Paris railway station always seems to be more or less like Colney Hatch let loose.

Janet sank down on a seat, and dreamily watched the hurrying throng, for she seemed to be nearer to Frank here than in the hotel. She felt so utterly lonely and miserable now that he was gone, and there was no more reason for forcing herself to appear cheerful. Fate was indeed against them, and the deep disappointment following the joyful expectations was almost more than she could bear.

Suddenly she gave a start. Whose was that face? Surely she had seen it before? A tall, young-looking man, with dark hair, and who carried a well-worn Gladstone bag in his hand. No, she knew no one

with dark hair like that; but what was familiar about him? Evidently he was an Englishman. No—yes—Janet, in looking at him, for a moment forgot her trouble. He was talking in French to an official, and she heard him say something about a "Bureau de Renseignement." What was that? Janet's French was not very first-rate as to accent, though she spoke fluently. The solution came suddenly into her mind. Enquiry Office, of course; but what was that peculiar scar on which the gaslight played? A scar; a curiously-shaped scar—she had seen it before. But where? It was—it was—yes, the young man who had been so civil about the rug! Of course! That was certainly the same mark. But then that man had—yes, *fair* curling hair, and this one—she glanced quickly again, her heart seemed to leap into her mouth—this one had *dark*, very dark hair; and yet it *was* the same mark. If so, it was—it was—yes, undoubtedly this man was disguised. And why?

She started from her seat as if struck by lightning; but already the stranger had walked rapidly away; and Janet, trembling with strange confused thoughts and excitement, sank down into her seat again.

Only for a moment however. Why should she not follow him? Suppose—wild supposition—that this disguised man should be the thief? And now she came to think of it, that dark hair was something like—or might be—the colour of the hair of the man in the railway-carriage, only there was no beard and no whiskers. If so——

Janet pinched herself in order to make herself think consecutive thoughts; her brain seemed on fire; why was she wasting time? She must follow him and accuse him——

"How stupid I am," said poor Janet to herself, suddenly becoming calm. "If Frank were only here he would know what to do. Where is the Enquiry Office? Anyhow, I can follow him and then see."

She asked the question of a stout official and he jerked his head towards a corridor in a dark corner of the big salle. By this time Janet had somewhat collected her thoughts and her prudence, and though still terribly excited she settled that it were wise to see and not be seen. She had a large black veil in her pocket which she had brought for the wind; this she now hastily tied round her hat and felt sure she could not be recognised. Also she had no travelling ulster on, and must look like quite another person.

As she reached the door of the Bureau and pushed it open, the Englishman came out, and she heard the last words of the clerk within:

"The train goes in a quarter of an hour, monsieur, so you have no time to lose."

"And you say there is a night service from Boulogne?"

"I have already told you so," said the irate official.

Janet stood on one side, but this time she determined not to let the man out of her sight. Neither would she venture into the Bureau; she had heard enough, her mind was made up. The night

service from Boulogne. She, too, would take it. What did luggage matter? She had her money with her; she had only to do what her companion did.

As to the result of her pursuit, she did not pause to consider. She felt that she might perhaps have made a discovery, and for Frank's sake she would do her best. She followed the gentleman at once to the ticket office. Several persons were taking tickets but there was no press and she managed, still closely veiled, to get behind him.

"Second class ticket, viâ Boulogne," he said, and Janet held her breath to make sure of his words. What if she should make a mistake?

When he had passed she repeated his remark.

"Second class ticket, viâ Boulogne."

The ticket official looked up at hearing a woman's voice; why, Janet could not imagine.

"Viâ Boulogne?"

"Yes," said Janet decidedly, and apparently her decision prevented further questioning.

She was safe now, at all events; she had the same ticket and she would be in the same train as that man. Mechanically she followed him and his Gladstone bag into the wooden pens which are so trying to the Englishman's love of liberty.

Once here, in the same place as the supposed thief, Janet began to cool down and all kinds of dreadful suppositions filled her brain. Had she not promised Frank to stay at the hotel till she heard from him; might she not just miss the real good of her staying behind by thus chasing a wild idea? She hardly dared look toward the stranger, who, standing near the door presently to be opened, took no notice of any other traveller.

By the time Janet had made herself miserable, the door was thrown open and the travellers were bidden to come forth. Janet noticed that there were but two women and several children besides herself and that they staggered under great bundles, whilst she carried nothing but a reticule and a small shawl. She noticed nothing more till she saw the man enter a smoking-carriage and then she hastily got in with the women and children, feeling less afraid now she was sure of a friendly fellow-traveller.

The deed was done and she was in the train on her way to England; it was no use regretting anything and she even smiled at the idea that Frank could not guess where she was or what she was doing.

Very soon the train shot forth into the gathering darkness; lurid clouds brooded no good to the travellers, and very soon the rain began; thick blinding rain that looked intensely dreary.

Janet shivered and the woman looked kindly at her, wondered she had not brought more wraps, and offered her one. Janet accepted gratefully and listened to a long story about the woman's history: her husband was waiter at an hotel and she was going to join him. The children were in great trouble about crossing the sea.

"We shall have a bad crossing," said Janet; "but the boats are good."

"Yes. I am going at night because it is cheaper, and my husband will meet me at Dover."

"Then you do not cross by Boulogne?"

"No. I was told to go to Calais."

Janet felt sorry; she liked the woman, and felt that she and her children were a protection. Then, intensely wearied out, she dozed a little till the train stopped and the tickets were examined.

"Madame goes on to Calais?" asked the official.

"No; to Boulogne for the night service. There is a boat, surely?"

"Yes, there is a boat."

Janet looked out at the driving rain and felt miserable. What had she undertaken? And suppose she were mistaken? Besides, what could she do?

At last "Boulogne" was called out, and stiff and cold she jumped out.

Everything here looked dull and miserable enough; her carriage was at the end of the train, and, though she looked about for the traveller, she saw no one. It was cold and windy, and still the rain came down mercilessly.

Giving up her ticket, Janet ventured to say to the collector:

"There is a night service here? I am going by it."

The man looked at her ticket and replied:

"There's an omnibus going to the quay. Madame will go down in it, as it rains?"

"Yes; certainly. Is there no other passenger by this train?"

"No other lady got down. A gentleman has gone on; do you want him?"

"Oh, no; I am alone." And Janet hurried to the omnibus, feeling utterly forlorn.

What were they waiting for? She thought she would be late and asked the question.

"Oh, there is another train in twenty minutes; we are waiting for that."

And Janet waited too, being able to do nothing else. She was happy, however, for now she knew that man had got out here.

Twenty minutes seemed like twenty years. A little bustle followed the arrival of the next train, but no passengers appeared, and without showing any great haste the coachman got on the box, the other man on the step peered into the darkness which shrouded poor Janet, and then the vehicle rattled off down the long quay. It was nearly midnight; darkness relieved by only a few stray lights making darkness more horrible; and still the wind and rain made a melancholy accompaniment.

Janet had fancied herself brave, but now she shuddered; the whole episode was so strange, and she seemed to be the only lady

passenger who had come from the train. Of course, the others had slept at Boulogne.

Jolted without pity, she looked forward to hurrying to her berth; and when the omnibus pulled up short she stepped out at once, not caring for the rain.

"Is the boat here?" she asked, paying her fare.

"Yes, madame; will madame get out?"

"Of course. I will go on board at once."

Janet stepped out into the rain and semi-darkness, but saw no boat. There was an air of perfect solitude here which surprised her.

"Madame wants to go on to the boat—the night service," said the conductor, passively.

"Ah!" said the coachman, still more calmly; then calling out to another man who held a lantern, he repeated the remark:

"Madame wants to go on to the night boat."

"Impossible. No one goes on board till a quarter of an hour before starting."

"And when does it start?" asked Janet, as she tried to hold her umbrella up against the driving wind and rain.

"At two o'clock."

"Then I must go back to the station," she answered, feeling sick at heart and lonely, but still determined to cross, as she put her foot on the step of the old omnibus.

"Pardon, madame, but we do not return again. It is no use your getting in."

"But what am I to do? I cannot stay here on the quay in the rain and darkness."

The man shrugged his shoulders. It was nothing to him what madame did.

"It is very stormy to-night. Madame had better put off till to-morrow."

"No. I must go to-night," she said. "I must go to an hotel or café; anywhere so as to be ready to start by the night service."

"There's the hotel near the railway."

Janet almost said Yes, but how could she get back? And then *he* might be there; he might recognise her, and so give her the slip. If what she believed was true, that man had the diamonds either on his person or in his luggage.

"Let me go to the nearest place; anywhere where I can sit down," she said, determined not to give way after what she had gone through.

"Here, then, André; just show this lady the way to some café. There can only be a few open now."

André was an old fisherman, who was overhauling some baskets, evidently part of the cargo for the night service boat.

"This way, madame," said the old man, looking down kindly on the slight figure by his side. "Madame is alone?"

"Yes."

"It's a windy night to be crossing."

"I'm going to my husband," said Janet, feeling how strange it must seem to the Frenchman to see her quite alone and unprotected.

"Here is the nearest café. They have only opened a week, and don't seem inclined to shut up."

"Will you fetch me when it is time to go? It would be very kind," asked Janet, humbly.

"Certainly. I'm helping to load the steamer."

He opened the door, and then left her, and Janet found herself in a small room with the accessories of a poor café—small wooden tables, on which there were large water bottles and glasses, and a dirty sanded floor. In one corner a dark-eyed woman and two men were playing at cards; the men were speaking in loud tones, and looked not too sober. Janet did not like the appearance of the party.

"I want to have a room to wait in till the night boat goes," said Janet, in a low voice. The woman stared, and the men turned round to see the strange apparition.

"A room? Come here, Mariette; show madame upstairs, and then go to bed," said the hostess; then the party resumed their play.

A dirty, sleepy servant showed Janet up some narrow stairs, and opened the first door she came to with a certain air of grandeur.

"Here is a room for madame; and a good bed, if madame likes to rest."

"Thank you; leave me the candle and matches," said Janet, thankful at last to be under shelter and alone.

The door closed, and Janet looked round. How strange that the sound of voices came up so clearly. She looked about for a window, for the place was close and stuffy, and of evil odour. There was a thick curtain across the window. Where did it look out? If on to the street she would feel more at ease, for never had she felt so much as if she were in very strange company. If only Frank were with her! She peeped behind the curtain, and saw——Good heavens! the window merely looked down into the café, and there below her, but not looking her way, were the woman and the two men. She was in a kind of box-room, very like an enclosed "minstrels' gallery" of the public room.

Janet thought at once how easily she could be murdered here, and that no one would hear of her again. She regretted not having insisted on getting into the boat. Surely she could not in her cabin have interfered with the loading. She saw now that a pane of the window was broken, and if she listened she could hear all that was said. She hastily drew back the curtain and gazed round the room. It was very small and devoid of furniture, except such as was absolutely necessary. The bed looked most uninviting, and she determined to wait patiently seated on the only chair the room contained.

Presently the sounds below became louder; Janet could hear some of the words. What were they doing? A cold shudder crept through her veins. The most raging sea would be preferable to this room; but what could she do?

She determined to watch the strange party; just as one watches an animal one is afraid of. So, softly locking her door, she blew out her candle and drew a little of the curtain back. Close to the window she could hear perfectly what was said. Evidently they were having high words over the game.

One of the two men, who sat a little sideways, so that Janet could see his ill-favoured profile, was holding two five-franc pieces in his hand, or so Janet fancied by the look of them.

"There's only an hour before the boat goes, and I must double my money. Sacré bleu! Martin, you couldn't have won that last set if you hadn't cheated."

"Cheated! Ah, ah, mon vieux!" Then came a string of oaths which had never been included in Janet's French grammar or dictionary.

"Yes, I expect someone has marked these cards. Is it you, Madame Minaud?"

"That's good! What will you say next, Artoit? You have been drinking too much; and it is not often you get so much money in your hands."

Artoit certainly looked as if he had been drinking; but as there was still a bottle and little glasses by the side of the two, the drinking was not all in the past. He now emptied another glassful of brandy, and struck the table with his fist.

"Let us begin again.—Wait a moment! I'll put the Englishman's bag ready, and it won't take me a moment to run across the quay with it."

He staggered across the café, came just below Janet's window, and soon returned with a Gladstone bag in his hand, which he put close to his chair.

A Gladstone bag—why *he* had carried one; but then why should it be his? Janet held her breath as she looked at it intently.

The hostess also looked at it without holding her breath, but she stooped down and tried to open it, in spite of Artoit's growl of remonstrance.

"Let it alone, Madame Minaud."

"If you had two five-franc pieces given you to carry it from the station it must contain something worth having. Let's see."

"The Englishman was at the hotel, he gave me his bag to carry down to the boat, and said he would follow in five minutes. I never told him I should come here."

Artoit laughed loudly at this; it seemed indeed to amuse them all. The bag, however, was securely locked, and not to be opened, and in a moment they began their game again, and time for them passed all

too quickly. But still in the same cramped attitude sat Janet, crouching near the window, staring at the Gladstone bag.

By that first train she knew there had only been one passenger besides herself; but, of course, by the second train there might have been others who had not come to the omnibus. Those others might have had Gladstone bags. What more likely? But yet—why should two five-franc pieces be given for the carriage of a bag worth so little money? Why had not the owner taken it with him from the station? Was it that he did not wish to be recognised as having a bag at all in his possession? Or, was it that he might be donning another disguise? Janet had a woman's mind; she was so firmly convinced she was right that each new discovery was accepted as proof, when in truth no logical brain would have admitted that there was any proof at all.

"That bag," said Janet to herself, "contains the Kenite and the other stolen diamonds, and I *must* get hold of it. But how? *He* will not let it out of his sight when once on the boat."

She looked and looked, and knew nothing of time; only she racked her brain to find a plan, but none came—none. Still the men drank and played, and in a short time Artoit became so muddled that after a period of idiotic laughing, his head sank on his arm, whilst his companions in vain tried to rouse him.

"Leave him there," said the hostess, carefully abstracting some of his money from his waistcoat-pocket. "Anyhow, he owes me this for all the absinthe and brandy he has drunk."

A low knock at the door and Janet heard the old sailor's voice.

"The night boat will soon start. Where is the dame Anglaise?"

"Attendez, attendez," said the dark-eyed woman; "I'll tell her." But though Janet was afraid of discovery, she still stuck to her post: she was looking at the bag.

"What is to be done with Artoit?" whispered the landlady. "And this bag? A good idea! The sailor can take it across; I'll say it's madame's luggage. Once on the boat it won't matter. Or you, Martin, will you take it across? you see Artoit can't move."

"It's not weather for a dog to be out in. Thank you; Artoit can do his own errands."

Madame seized the bag and opened the door. Janet, by straining her ears, could hear her words.

"Come in, come in, monsieur; madame is coming at once; she was asleep. Here, take her bag, will you; it's not very heavy. I must make her pay for keeping us up so late. It's strange for a lady to be alone like this."

Another moment and Janet lighted the candle and answered madame's call as if she were asleep. She must act naturally.

"Make haste, madame, the boat is going very soon and I want to shut up. Here is the bill."

Janet opened the door and took the bill. It was exorbitant.

Never mind that. Supposing the bag were really his, she would almost send madame another pound. However, in order to keep up appearances, she said :

"It is very much. I have not been here long ——"

"Ah, madame, you came late, you have had the best room ; and it isn't everyone who would have taken in madame in this way ——"

Janet hurried away. In comparison with this woman the old sailor's face looked like the face of an angel to her, and she thought nothing of the gust of wind which nearly threw her down as the café door shut behind her. She seized his arm as she said :

"What a terrible crossing we shall have."

"Yes, indeed ; but you won't be more than six hours unless it gets worse."

"Six hours ! it is usually three." Then she said to herself : "How was she to keep the bag ? At present it was thought to be hers."

"There is a good cabin for ladies, I suppose ?" she asked aloud.

"There's a small cabin."

"And a stewardess ?"

"Not in this boat."

"Are there many other lady passengers ?"

"No, madame ; you are the only one ; but that won't matter."

"The only lady on board !" Janet stopped short. "But I can't go alone with no woman on board."

The old man led her to the edge of the quay and then peering through the darkness into the depth below, Janet saw a miserable little steamer, a mere cargo boat ; nothing like the beautiful steamer she had come in.

"No, no, I can't go. I will take a bed for the night at some hotel."

"Will you go back to Madame Minaud ?"

"No, no. Take me somewhere else," she said hurriedly. "I do not like the looks of that woman at all. Make haste, please ; I am getting wet through, and it is so cold."

The old sailor was evidently touched by her distress and after a moment's pause, said :

"Come then ; I know a good woman who will give you a bed. It is not far."

And Janet followed him, as, still carrying the bag, he led the way. Half an hour later she was once more alone in a room and the Gladstone bag was with her.

In spite of a locked door, she trembled with fear. It was the first time she had been in the position of knowingly keeping what was not her own ; but fate had indeed been on her side ; she was a very willing thief. She knelt beside the bag and wondered how to open it ; she tried to think how she was to return it if it proved to contain nothing but a gentleman's effects. Suppose the police were set on her track ? After searching it, she must get rid of it at once ; tired out as she was, she could not sleep with this thing in her room.

Suddenly she remembered she had Frank's keys and her own in her pocket. Their luggage was still at Paris, having never been claimed. With trembling hands, she drew the bunch of keys from her pocket and tried them. At first uselessly; then one slipped in, and she turned it. No, it only turned. She tried again and again; in vain; she must give it up. All at once, as if by magic, the key turned the lock and the bag flew open.

A mist of intense dread and hope came before her eyes; she could not see anything but some linen, some socks and other odds and ends. She must look thoroughly, now she had done the deed. She lifted the linen; the lost packets were so small in reality that they could be put into any corner. There was nothing—nothing. At last, almost mad with disappointment, she threw everything on the floor; she would empty the bag; she would look at everything.

Now all the contents were scattered, and not one package was unopened. All she had done, all she had gone through, was utterly useless!

If the man had disguised himself, then it had nothing to do with the loss of her husband's diamonds, and all the plots she had fancied she had unravelled were only a mare's nest.

Hot tears of bitter disappointment fell from her eyes. She heard the clock strike four; the dawn had not yet pierced the night's curtain; there was nothing to be heard but the faint sound of a distant market-cart. Evidently Boulogne folk rose early. Had the night boat gone without that passenger as it had certainly gone without his luggage? Or, worse thought—had he waited for it?

One by one she put back the things as neatly and carefully as she would have done for Frank; she felt so penitent for having accused that poor, unknown man of robbery. She mentally asked his pardon very humbly now. He should anyhow find everything in order in his bag if not exactly in the same order as before. The dress-coat should not be crushed, a pair of socks squeezed into that corner should prevent his best shirt-front from being crumpled.——But how was this? This pair of socks would not be squeezed as socks are meant to be. They were hard—they were not rolled properly. Janet unrolled them. Out fell—yes, upon the floor, a packet, a small box. On the box, half broken off, was the seal always used by the firm of Milsom and Harris.

Janet stifled a cry of joy. Wildly she again turned out the bag, undid the other socks, and found several more boxes. After all, she was right; right;—and she had found the diamonds. She had saved Frank's future; she had——Poor little woman! tired, excited and wet through, Janet hid her face in her hands and this time wept for joy.

Before the quay was as lively as usual, a little figure might have been seen walking quietly down to the landing-place, followed by a blue bloused man, carrying a Gladstone bag.

The little English lady was very self-possessed; at all events outwardly.

The official at the small custom-house was reading a telegram when Janet addressed him.

"Monsieur, I could not go by the boat last night; I heard there was no stewardess on board. There ought to be one. I shall complain about it. The sailor who took me to some lodgings brought this bag to me; he thought it was my luggage. It is not mine, and I have to pay this man for bringing it back."

"A bag—Ah, a bag—yellow—a Gladstone bag. Here is a telegram about this. It is fortunate you brought it. But there! it should have been registered."

"May I see the telegram, monsieur? I am sorry the gentleman is anxious. Would it be well to telegraph to him? I will pay for the message."

The official showed her the telegram. Janet noted the address. She meant to follow that trace; at least, of course, the firm would. How they would praise her! Tired—not much, this morning; why, she felt inclined to dance.

"I must go by the next boat; when does it start? May I use this ticket?"

"No, madame, you must take another; this one only holds good for the night service."

Janet remained long enough to see that the telegram was sent. "Bag all right; will follow by next boat." Janet sent another telegram to Frank and directed it to Mr. Harris at his office. "Do nothing more till you see me. Crossing by Boulogne boat."

It was only afterwards that Janet fully realised the weary waiting at Boulogne till the starting of the afternoon boat, and the stormy crossing. What she did fully realise at the time was the passing glimpse of a man with fair hair and gentlemanly appearance hurrying on to the boat at Folkestone to make inquiries for a lost Gladstone bag, and the agony she endured till the train steamed out of Folkestone, en route for London.

The next thing to be always remembered was Frank's face at the station: it was so pale and anxious.

"Janet, dearest, you are safe! What news? Tell me quickly. Mr. Harris is here waiting to know." He dared say no more. And then Janet cried and laughed as she answered:

"Oh, Frank, I have turned detective, and I have found them; I have them here. Aren't you glad?" In spite of the public place, she held out the small boxes which she had concealed in her dress. "Look, Frank, are they all here? Is the Kenite safe?"

"Yes, thank God! Janet, you have saved us! My clever little wife! But I can't understand. Where is the thief; is he caught? But wait! Where is the proof against him?—for we have all the diamonds here. Did the police keep nothing? If so he will escape us."

"How stupid of me! Frank, I never thought of that. I searched his bag and took everything. I am not a good detective yet. Never mind; come and tell Mr. Harris. I have so much to tell you."

Need we say that Mr. Harris was as much impressed with Janet's pluck as was her husband.

"It was fortunate I did tell my wife," said Frank Hulse to Mr. Harris when they parted.

"My dear fellow, she's one in a thousand! By the way, what about your trip to Paris?" The young pair shook their heads; they didn't want to go back there!

But before the next summer was over Mr. and Mrs. Hulse went to Switzerland in grand style, for Frank was now "Co." in the firm of Milsom and Harris.

THE MILESTONE.

Men and women, a shifting crowd, we hasten by;
Less changeful moves a summer cloud across the sky.
But firmly by the broad highway
Is set the milestone worn and gray.
Let him who will its legend read,
Or idly glance or scorn to heed;
Yet it whispers to everyone,
Just so much of the journey done.

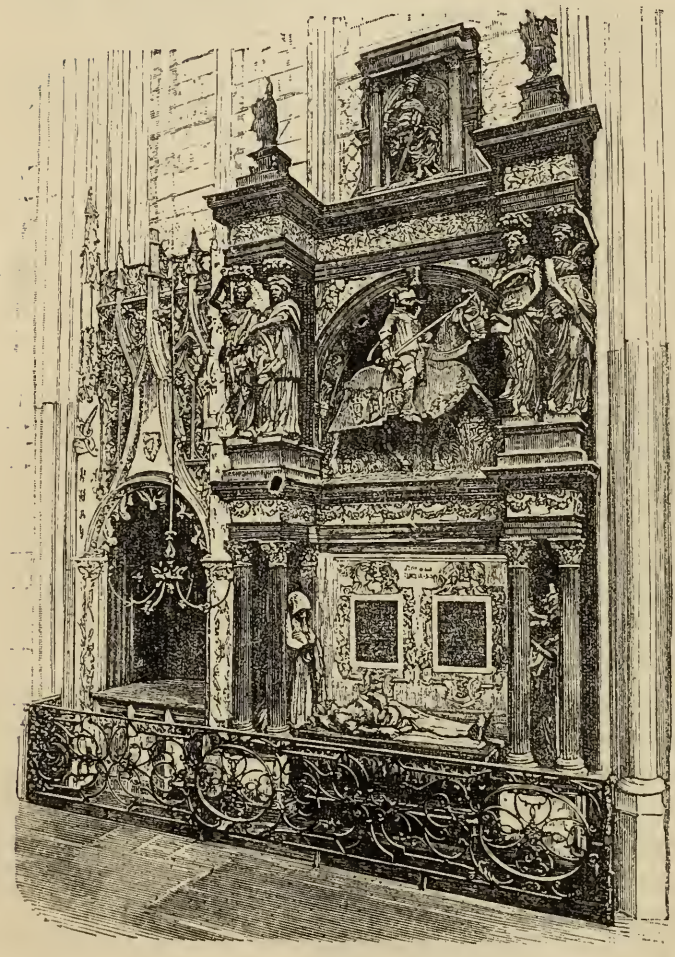
Just so much of the journey done ere falls the night;
Tired feet their way have hither won, and footsteps light.
Here troop the children warm with play,
Here fondly dreaming lovers stray.
Fair as young hope do buds of spring
About the ancient milestone cling;
Still it marks in the morning sun,
Just so much of the journey done.

Soft and slow like a mourner's tears there falls the rain;
Through misty half-forgotten years love looks in vain.
Grief-laden showers, ye may not raise
The withered flowers of other days;
Yours will it rather be to shrine
The bow whose promise is divine,
When at last in the setting sun,
The milestone tells the journey done.

Sydney Grey.

FAIR NORMANDY.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



Tomb of Louis de Brézé, Rouen Cathedral.

WE steamed into Newhaven long before we thought we had arrived. But there was no doubt about it. The train discharged its cargo, human and otherwise. Most people were evidently prepared for the event, and in a moment the platform was crowded. Nearly everyone carried a bag or bundle; and in the present instance the bundles were incommoding and aggressive, and gave rise to sundry ejaculations that in days gone by would not have been considered parliamentary, but that in the times on which we have fallen are very much so. People have a way of doing up their sticks and umbrellas with their rugs, regardless of ribs and the human frame in general, including the human temper. The result is often loss of dignity on both sides: sinning and sinned-against declining, like the coloured gentleman who stopped the dance because someone had been guilty of the baseness of embracing his wife, to "accept an apology."

The crowd hurried through the long shed which runs down the length of the Newhaven platform. The lady travellers looked, as usual, singular objects, very much out of balance. It must be a serious study with them to discover the most grotesque manner in

which they can dress themselves for travelling, and doing what our forefathers called the Grand Tour. All that can be said in extenuation of the barbarism is that if the "Englishwoman abroad" occasionally shocks our sensibilities by recalling the ceremonies of the fifth of November, she also adds a good deal to our enjoyment by equally rousing one's sense of humour. However, there are many exceptions to the rule.

"Have you *everything?*" I asked of H. C., who had undertaken to look after our small impedimenta throughout the journey. He knew of old my propensity for losing everything by degrees, and my inability to carry anything in the shape of a load without a humiliating collapse. We had not travelled together since our visit to Majorca, where he had so wasted his time in writing poetry, and studying the postures of the fair penitents in the softly-lighted churches: that dim religious gloaming which appeals so much to the senses, and like a sweet, subdued voice, charms all who come beneath its influence.

Extremes meet: and after Majorca, H. C.'s spirit seemed to have undergone a transformation. It is not at all an unusual experience in life, as everyone will acknowledge who has made mankind his proper study. H. C. was also at a transitional age: that period of life, when to-day we go from the sublime to the ridiculous, to-morrow return to the sublime, the day after once more take up the ridiculous. The only objection to be made is that we are at this age generally much more ridiculous than sublime; and, perhaps, are sublimely unconscious of being either the one or the other.

H. C. then, after Majorca, had, like the weathercock on the Temple of the Winds, veered round. He had gone from South to North; from poetry to prose.

In other words, he had visited Ireland for the express purpose of studying the question of Home Rule. In Majorca he had been, in politics, an advanced Liberal; almost a Radical: a state of mind which had given rise to a hundred quarrels between us; and, happily, as many reconciliations. He returned from Ireland a staunch Conservative; clothed and in his right mind; convinced that Conservatism was absolutely necessary to the welfare and ultimate saving of the country; that Home Rule was a delusion of the evil one, compared with which dynamite was an agency for good; and that the days of Radicalism were numbered.

This was a wonderful change for the better, and its effect upon him was apparent in the fine repose his countenance had gained during the transitional period.

To return. "Have you *everything?*" I asked, as we followed leisurely on the outskirts of the crowd. For all this hurry and bustle was unnecessary; we had a great amount of time before us.

"*Everything*," replied H. C. "You can depend upon me. I never left anything behind me in my life."

Yet when, on board, I looked for my favourite stick and a friend's

ancient umbrella, who had taken my new one in a mistake for his own in coming away from a dinner-party the previous evening—these things are always mistakes, and always at the expense of the victim—I found that stick and umbrella were not forthcoming. H. C. protested that he had left nothing behind him, and I could not have brought them from home. However, on writing a letter of inquiry to the lost property office, at Victoria, in due time I received the following reply:

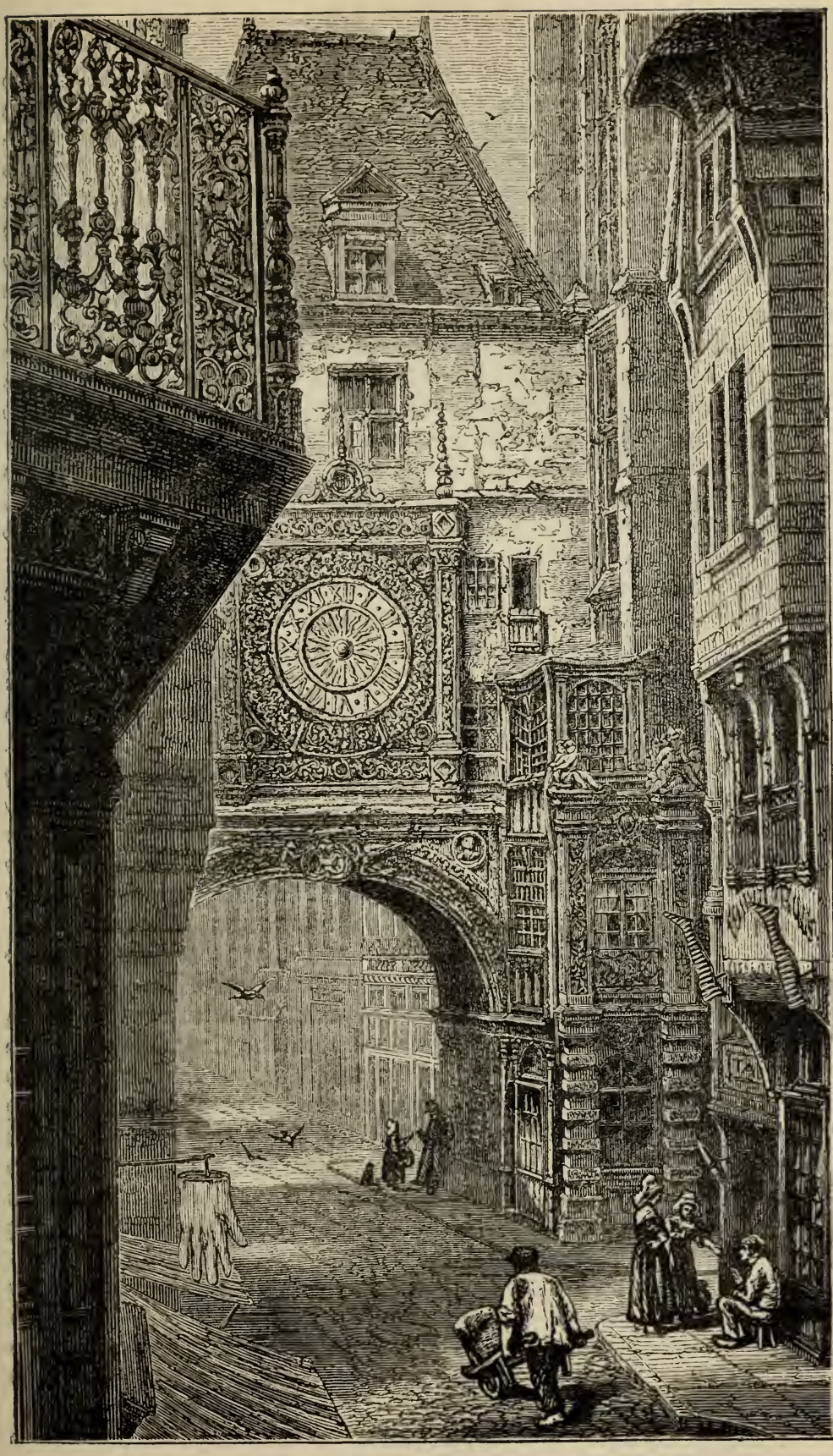
"Sir,—Your stick and umbrella—the latter very old and slightly disfigured with holes in the silk and one or two broken ribs—were found in a first-class railway compartment, at Newhaven, and have, as usual in such cases, been forwarded to the London Bridge Lost Property Office. May we suggest to the gentleman who left them behind, that the new-fashioned waterproof, of which the little cape is finished off with hooks, whereon to hang umbrellas, small parcels, guide books, old china and similar articles, would be found useful, and would save further losses on your journey?"

This was an excellent idea that had never struck us—though we thought the Lost Property Office at Victoria slightly presuming in offering advice. To see H. C. going about like a perambulating suspending machine or rotatory roasting-jack, would certainly be productive of what in these days one so earnestly seeks and so seldom finds—a new sensation. But the Missing Property Office, like the Frenchman in the fable, had lost sight of greater possibilities. Before many days were over, H. C. came to me with a countenance expressive of greater misery than I had ever thought countenance could assume; he had lost his mackintosh. Of course any articles suspended from the cape would have gone with it.

Passing in due time through the shed, and following like sheep in the footsteps of the crowd, we saw, far down the quay, the Dieppe boat getting up steam.

It was quite a warm day and the sun shone brilliantly, though it was the end of September, and all the Michaelmas bills were probably passing through the post for those who had Michaelmas bills to pay; and all the Michaelmas geese had quacked their last requiem, had been dressed and eaten by that large class of the community who would rather be guilty of high treason than depart from the observance of ancient customs; especially when those customs concern the pleasures of the table. How long, for instance, would the Lord Mayor's show continue if the Lord Mayor's banquet were put an end to? It can be nothing but that glorious anticipation which sustains the great dignitary and all the lesser lights of the Civic List, in their conspicuous progress through wards and boundaries, through "Chepe and Bar" on each recurring ninth of November. It may indeed be said, that men are heroes and know it not.

We steamed out of Newhaven in full sunshine, which played and



ANCIENT CLOCK TOWER, ROUEN.

glittered upon the water, and made us feel happy and exhilarated as the best efforts of Soyer or Francatelli could never have done. But then we were not Lord Mayors and Aldermen. We were above the pleasures of the table. Our feasts were feasts of reason and flows of soul. The glories of sunshine, the beauties of nature, the grandeur of the boundless ocean, the matchless monuments of antiquity raised by human genius: these we delighted in; these were the objects of our ambition; these formed the delight of our eyes. We were disciples of Dr. Syntax; and, if we did not meet with all the adventures, all the fame and distinction of that great and immortal man, we were content to follow in his footsteps and shine as lesser lights. There are stars of different degrees in all the constellations, and these contribute to the making of a perfect whole.

The sea this morning was almost a sea of glass. Had it not been for a slight swell upon the water, H. C. would never have lost his brilliant complexion and tried all parts of the vessel in turn for a comfortable quarter without motion.

As we left the piers of Newhaven and gazed back upon the town with feelings that Lord Byron might have envied, it looked quite picturesque and romantic. There were no grand monuments to be seen; no twelfth-century cathedral or fourteenth-century ruin, ecclesiastical or otherwise; but the shores were English, and we were parting from them, and what sentiment could stir up greater emotion? H. C., indeed, who had only recently left the Emerald Isle, had caught up much of the spirit of its demonstrative people, disappeared in the saloon on pretence of recovering himself. But some twenty minutes later, on going down to inquire after him, I found him settling an extensive luncheon bill with the steward. He paid for his treachery presently in a very different coin; but I will not reveal secrets.

The shores of old England dissolved and disappeared, and in about four hours' time those of France opened up to our vision.

By this time the weather had changed; the skies were overcast; rain was beginning to fall. We went up to the Captain for consolation, who only harrowed our feelings by telling us that "the clouds were full of rain, and for some days to come we should have a steady downpour." We told him we rather differed from him. "So did the Inquisitors from Galileo," he replied with a calm superiority, "but for all that the fine old fellow was right." H. C. thought this a disrespectful way of speaking of the great astronomer, but presently philosophically remarked that most men are a law unto themselves, and must be judged accordingly in all matters that do not concern the great principles of our mental and moral nature. Nevertheless we conceived less respect for the skipper's "weather forecasts;" we took heart of grace—and the rain actually cleared and the clouds rolled away as we entered Dieppe Harbour.

We had not seen it for some years, yet nothing, at a first glance, seemed changed.

The whole quay, the outlines of town and churches, awoke sad memories within us. What happy days we had spent here in our boyhood, with one whose pen was laid aside and whose voice was silent for ever. One whose beauty of face and gracefulness of spirit we had never seen equalled. One who day by day and year by year had borne a never-varying charm; whose price had been to us as far above rubies, and whose departure withdrew for ever all our sunshine. What inexpressibly sad and bitter-sweet memories those days now awoke within us. What numberless incidents and hours of pleasure and delight passed as the scenes of a panorama through the memory—that illimitable world with its inexhaustible caverns. Dieppe, at that period, was the most fashionable of all resorts on the sea coast. It was a long succession of ambassadors' and other balls of almost regal splendour; of afternoon and evening receptions; of picnics to the Château d'Arques, where wine and laughter mingled and flowed in light and sparkling streams; and a happy carelessness marked the hours, and youth gilded the very sunshine. And ghostly séances and spiritualistic manifestations did their best to convert the sceptical in these matters, but seldom succeeded. And the Casino was ever gay with a refined crowd, and the sea for ever rolled and swished over its pebbly beach.

It still rolls on. It is just the same as ever; as far as can be seen it has not advanced or receded by a span or a hair's breadth. The very bathing machines are unchanged; the pebbles on the shore might be the same as those of old. But the fun and laughter, the happy carelessness which thought that sorrow would never come, and nothing would ever change, and youth and comeliness would last for ever—where are they? Echo answers Where? and her voice is sad with the sadness of "a far-off wail as of souls in pain"—but it is only the answering refrain of our own soul, labouring in sorrow for "what might have been" in the intervening years: all the hopes unfulfilled, all the joys we have missed; all the tangled threads that once promised to remain so clear a skein in our keeping; all the future that promised to be so brilliant. What is the life of each one of us, compared with the anticipated triumphs of youth, but a long series of failures and delusions, of rude awakenings and hardening realities?

And to us, above all changes: the beautiful eyes that were wont to gaze into our own; the silvery voice that took a yet softer and sweeter tone at our approach; the hand that would seek ours with gentle pressure; the words and thoughts and deeds that were ever full of a wisdom that was better than the wisdom of this world: all closed and silent with a silence that is death-like; leaving a vacancy that ever seems boundless as the realms of space; a solitude measureless as eternity.

But nothing, as far as we could see of Dieppe itself, was changed. The quay, as of old, was lined with groups of people. There were fishermen with their baskets, and fishwomen with their white caps

and fresh faces, all intent for the moment upon the approaching steamer. The quay looked very picturesque, and H. C. was charmed.

There is a fascination undoubtedly about seamen and everything belonging to sea life which never fails to assert itself. The rough dress of the sailor is often distinguished by a harmony of tone and colouring that a landsman may seek in vain. His occupation invests him with a singular and exceptional interest. There is nothing small or narrow about it: it is free and adventurous. It is associated with all the grandeur of the ocean. Its very danger gives it an additional charm. "They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." Men of whom such words can be written are separated from the ordinary level of mankind, with all its small aims and jealousies, all its lowering rivalries.

And so they are always picturesque and interesting. The very outlines of their craft, whether silhouetted against a dark grey sky, or storm-tossed upon the angry waves, or gliding smoothly over calm waters gilded by summer sunshine: these outlines in all phases of light and shade, of storm or calm, fill one with admiration, and at once appeal to one's sense of the beautiful.

To H. C., who was far less at home on these shores than the writer: who knew, indeed, far more of the Emerald Isle than of France; yet who possibly would succeed in tracing many a point of resemblance between the two races: everything bore the charm of novelty. He saw a picturesqueness in every face and form which we certainly did not always detect, and carried his theory—that every person possesses a marked individuality of his own which gives him a distinct and separate interest—to a point bordering upon mania.

That no two minds are exactly alike is a fact that has long been settled out of court; but that every person possesses sufficient individuality to make him personally interesting is an error only to be indulged by those who have seen little of the world, or who—to quote Pope once more—have not made mankind their proper study.

The truth is that individuality is the rarest of gifts. The greater portion of mankind is imitative; has no opinion of its own, and so affords Darwin some excuse for his supposed discovery in the regions of evolution, and Carlyle a good deal of reason for his sweeping condemnations. Perhaps all this is as well; for one sees too often that when men have strong opinions they often lead them into wild errors which land them high and dry upon the rocks of failure and adversity. If the wisdom of Solomon has descended, it has diminished through the ages, and, like the Prophet's mantle, has fallen upon few.

H. C. did not wish to stay in Dieppe, and I did not care to do so. Some old memories are pleasant to revive, others are full of pain. We therefore decided to go through to Rouen.

The boat drew up alongside with what seemed infinite labour, and

ANCIENT HOUSE, ROUEN.

the crowd that had rushed through the sheds and up the quays of Newhaven now landed and crossed very soberly to the custom-house. They were no longer in their own country, and their ardour seemed to cool before the prospect of the ordeal before them. It is, after all, a very mild ordeal for those who have nothing to declare and are guiltless of the good old-fashioned but dangerous game of smuggling. Our own part was soon over. H. C., looking somewhat pale and cadaverous, hastened over to the buffet, where he made excellent use of his time; after which we took our seats in the train and steamed away.

We left the crowded harbour, with its straggling groups and all its shipping, and passed down the quay beside some of the houses of the town that were sufficiently old and quaint and curious to make us feel ourselves in a new and much more interesting world than we had left four or five hours ago. H. C., like many before him, was puzzled to find everyone about him talking French; and that even the very street boys possessed an advantage in speaking a language that was a sealed book to him. I may anticipate the weeks by adding that on his return to England he was equally perplexed at hearing the street boys talking English.

We passed away from the town, and endeavoured to banish all sad remembrances from our mind. The "luxury of pain" has never appealed to our temperament. Pain we have had, almost in infinitude, but it has at all times proved itself an "unmixed sorrow," in which the softer element found no place. And probably where that element does come in, the pain will be found of that gentle and sentimental description which rather adds a charm to the life: just as the slightest possible limp frequently adds a grace to the walk.

We steamed away from Dieppe, and shortly passing through a long tunnel, came back to light and life in the fertile valley of the Seir: a stream which, though narrow, adds much beauty to the landscape, and is so winding in its course that the railway crosses it more than twenty times. The scenery is charming and sylvan, though calm and smiling at first, rather than grand or sublime. Mills are dotted about here and there; factories are devoted to cotton spinning and the making of cotton goods, for which Normandy —and Rouen especially—is famous.

But the land is chiefly given up to orchards; and the apple trees in Normandy are as plentiful as the vines in Italy. For Normandy is a cider-loving country, and it takes the place of wine with the people. To-day the countless trees were laden with fruit: and the fruit was rosy and ready for falling. Here and there, indeed, where, perhaps, an orchard was more sheltered and sunny than its neighbours, the harvest had already begun, and men with long poles shook the branches and prodded refractory apples; and women gathered them into baskets and carried them to the carts in waiting.

The scenery was very English in aspect—as it so often is both

in Normandy and Brittany: a rare thing in France, or anywhere abroad. The fields were often intersected by hedges that in summer must be green and flowering, the home of the wild rose and the honeysuckle. The valley was broken up by hills, and the more distant were thickly wooded, clothing the landscape with a rich and luxuriant garment. This was heightened by the tints of autumn, which were beginning to appear.

One only regretted that the train steamed on too quickly, and that spots on which we would have liked to feast our eyes passed in flashes out of sight.

Here and there we came upon deep ravines, wild and wooded, made musical and sparkling by the streams which ran through them. One longed to explore them; to follow them up to their source; and they would no doubt well repay any amount of labour; but Time forbids these luxuries and delights. The hidden nooks and recesses of a country, the most beautiful and the most untrodden, must for most of us remain unknown. The days and the weeks pass too quickly. He who can devote his life to wandering may take all the by-paths and silent ways of the world. But most of us must be content with earth's broader outlines. We must fill in the details in imagination, or in our dreams. We have this advantage: we may fill them in as we will, and make of each dream-picture a paradise.

We passed through the town and valley of Clère, noting on the left an interesting but restored château of the fifteenth century. Then, running over a magnificent viaduct a hundred feet high, we stopped at Malaunay.

From this point to Rouen, the line passes through a series of detached villas and factories and tall chimneys, and it all looked very business-like and very English. Yet the wooded hills and undulations, the well-kept gardens and smiling orchards that were still in evidence, lent their charm to the scene, and made even the prosy mills and chimneys seem interesting and romantic. Even the very smoke that hung over Rouen possessed an attraction that no smoky town in England could bring with it. It was clear and blue, resembling rather a denser atmosphere tinged with the colour of the sky. Finally, with a charming view of the blue hills bordering the Seine, we passed into the station.

A man in a white blouse immediately seized upon our hand luggage, and rapidly disappeared. We looked for him right and left; we made every inquiry; but we saw him no more.

At length a young porter claimed kinship with the delinquent as "mon oncle," and announced that he had gone off with a lady. This sounded suspicious, and seemed to reflect upon the morals, if not the honesty, of the absent porter. A woman, they say, is at the bottom of every mischief—a condemnation at once sweeping and comprehen sive. But here was a case in point.

At length: after the station, and all the remaining porters—who considered their honour involved and their character at stake—had given twenty minutes to clearing up the mystery, had searched every nook and corner of the baggage department, and had driven the station-master to desperation: the missing luggage was found in the depths of one of the empty carriages outside, of which the coachman, tired of the delay, had fallen—more or less uncomfortably—asleep on his box. The absent porter was honest after all, but that was the most that could be said for him. Neither he nor the lady had put in an appearance when we finally departed.

We made straight for the Hôtel d'Angleterre, and, in doing so, looked in vain for the ancient streets, the gabled houses, and all the other signs of antiquity one associates with the time-honoured, historical name of Rouen. Alas! it may write Ichabod upon many of its lintels, for in too many instances its glory has departed. Commercially, probably it has increased in value; but for the artist, the searcher after antiquity, the lover of the beautiful, Rouen, as one understands the name and feels the far-off influence, is ceasing to exist. Much still remains to be thankful for, to dream over, to sketch mentally and actually; but of that which remains the days are no doubt numbered. With the dawning of the twentieth century, Rouen, with the exception of a few of her greater monuments, will have passed into a new existence.

It is a thing to weep over, only that we cannot devote the luxury of tears to departed buildings and ancient outlines. We have to reserve these for our private sorrows, our own mental confessions—our catalogue of sins omitted and committed. If the list is not as long as the famous record of Leporello, for each of us it is no doubt a burden sufficiently heavy for the broadest shoulders.

We passed rapidly through streets with scarcely a vestige of antiquity remaining in them. Everything was new; the straight lines and square windows one sees everywhere. But from the Hôtel d'Angleterre the view was sufficiently wide and comprehensive. There are features here that cannot change. The broad river flowing to the sea; the islands upon the river that are for ever green and picturesque; the distant hills, with their graceful undulations; heights one longs to mount for the sake of the splendours lying below on all sides. The river flows on for ever before the hotel, and barges pass to and fro, and white-winged boats spread their sails and depart upward or downward, with wind and tide. The broad quays are modern, but the trees give them a cheerful aspect. Huge orange-trees in pots decorate the front of the inns, and under the awnings of the glittering cafés are innumerable small tables, where you may sit beneath the greenery and take your coffee, followed by a "chasse," in the form of cognac or liqueur, if you are self-indulgent. You watch the passers walking upward and the stream flowing downward, and the boats and the barges coming to anchor, whilst your ears are

OLD HOUSES, ROUEN.

devoted to your next door neighbour, who is recounting a choice bit of scandal to an absorbed and delighted companion.

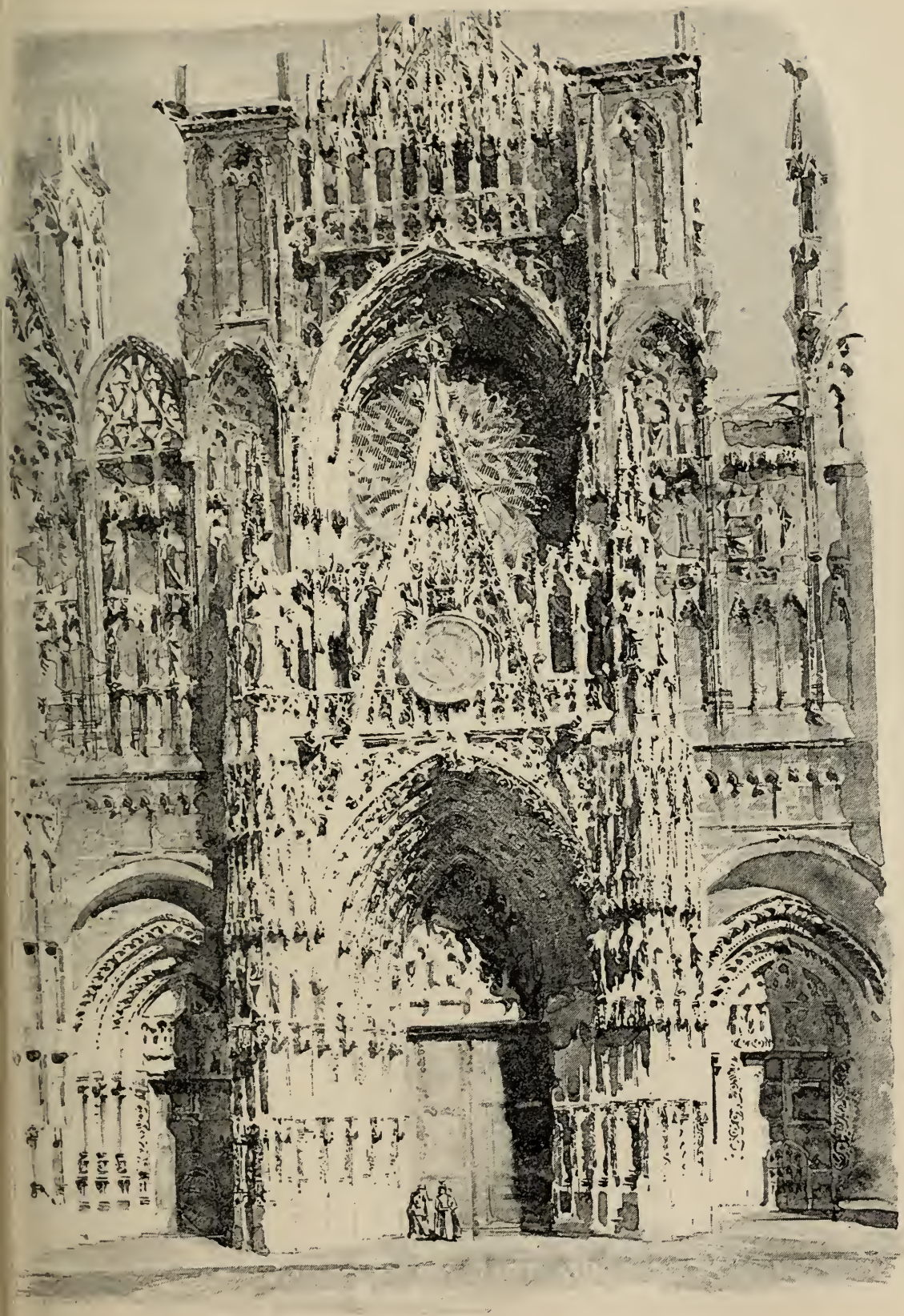
All this is very pleasant—not the scandal, but the scene. It is very lively, very French ; there is life and motion, that inexpressible vitality in the air, every large town in France possesses. But it is not Rouen as one pictures, and thinks, and dreams of the old town. The people are striking. They are well formed ; they stand and walk well ; they are frequently handsome ; they do not look altogether French ; and they are not French ; they are Norman : and the Normans do not consider themselves French, any more than the Scotch consider themselves English, and there is a certain English look and type about the Normans. They have a great deal of love for their country, and think of it very much as the Savoyard thinks of his beloved mountains. They do not fall ill of the mal-du-pays, like the poor Southerner, for they belong to Northern climes, and are a strong people ; nevertheless, they love and cherish their country, and no doubt would defend and die for it if called upon to do so. The spirit of Joan of Arc, though not a Norman herself, seems to have descended upon the country that so shamelessly put her to death, as if to prove, in the greatness of her soul, that she forgave them all their sin against her.

As we sat, shortly after our arrival, taking in the scene I have described, H. C., in spite of a fairly optimistic temperament, was in despair at what he called our first failure. I would not admit any failure, but felt sure we should find more than enough in Rouen to awaken old traditions, and give us at least an idea of what she had been in her best days.

The shades of evening were falling as we passed up a side street, and in a few moments found ourselves before the cathedral, the pride and glory of the old town. It stands in a market-place, once given up to fruit and flowers, confronted by houses, some of which possess ancient outlines much modernised. This putting new faces upon old tenements is, as a rule, very unsatisfactory in its results ; producing an incongruous element that is terribly inartistic. It resembles a faded beauty patched up with paint and powder : the artificial does not adorn, and only makes one regret departed realities the more. We are Time's subjects, and we cannot cheat him.

The front of the cathedral stands out conspicuously, but the houses on either side are, as usual, too close to it. On the whole, however, it is well placed.

We first saw it, perhaps in the most favourable of all lights ; in the gloaming, when everything is softened and subdued to a solemn, even a romantic tone. We both felt that here alone was sufficient repayment for a visit to Rouen. Of course one had heard all about the cathedral, knew all about it, had seen photographs and engravings innumerable of it. But none approached the reality as we now gazed upon it in all its glory. H. C., perhaps, in the accompanying sketch of the



ROUEN CATHEDRAL. *West Front.*

centre doorway, has succeeded better in giving the true feeling which this grand west front is capable of inspiring.

He held his breath and hushed his tones as he looked, and, with the fervour and inconsistency of enthusiasm and impulse, declared he had never seen anything to equal it. He walked solemnly and slowly towards it, then solemnly and slowly away from it, a performance about five times repeated. He inclined his head to the right and then to the left; and then as far as possible turned it upside down. He converted his features into fifty different expressions of amazement and admiration, that on the stage would have made his fortune; and he repeated with the regularity of a rehearsal, that he was amazed. He pronounced the word "sublime!" with more intonations than a Chinese ever imagined or invented; until, for very weariness, I began to feel my own ardour cooling.

And yet I think it was as lovely as he thought it, and deserved all the wild enthusiasm he gave to it.

As we saw it in the soft and waning light, with rosy, fleecy clouds reflecting the glory of a distant and invisible sunset, it really looked an unearthly vision. It was like a huge and magnificent piece of fretwork, that must have come down from the skies, for it could hardly have been raised by man. One almost expected to see it disappear again into celestial regions, for which it seemed so well fitted.

The central doorway was deep and carved, and bore that exquisite and crumbling look that nothing but age bestows. The whole Gothic front is of vast proportions, and is singularly rich in sculptures and florid decorations. Many have found fault with it as being too richly and profusely ornamented; but the whole has been so toned down by age, is so wonderfully subdued and refined, is altogether in such perfect taste, that the objection cannot now be admitted. The plainness of severe Gothic, the arched outlines of the Romanesque may and do possess a beauty and charm of which one can never tire. But it is equally impossible to tire of such rich and rare adornment as this façade of Rouen Cathedral, softened and subdued by time to the refinement and effect of lace-work; impossible to grow weary of it, or to bestow upon it anything but praise. It has as much its place in architecture as the severest, most simple and unadorned examples.

The central porch, originally of the purest type of early work, was embellished with all its present graceful and flamboyant decorations by the Cardinal Georges d'Amboise, the favourite of Louis XII. The first Bishop of Rouen was St. Mellon, a native of Wales. The first Christian church was built on the site of the present one, A.D. 207; to be rebuilt in the year 400. It was destroyed in 841; and was again rebuilt in 912. The building was completed, and William of Normandy was present at its dedication in 1063: three years before the Norman Conquest. It was burnt down in 1200; and for four hundred years from that date, the present edifice was

in process of construction. King John of England, the last Duke of Normandy, whose name occurs not infrequently in the archives of Normandy and Brittany, contributed to the rebuilding of the cathedral, and is looked upon as one of its founders.

The façade of the church is contradictory in style. Some portions, like the central doorway, are loaded with decorations; others, like the pinnacled buttresses on either side the doorway, being simply built up in the rough, their panels and capitals without any carving whatever. The towers are also out of keeping with each other, and with the rest of the front. To some, this adds a charm to the whole; to others, it produces an opposite effect. H. C. conceived that the diversity of style and ornamentation was good; I scarcely thought so. No two towers in Continental cathedrals are ever quite alike, and the difference, be it small or great, is generally an additional charm to the structure; for the change does away with the monotony of similarity, whilst they invariably harmonize. In Rouen Cathedral it is not so: the towers differ, but they do not harmonize. They were built at different periods, and in different styles.

The north tower, that of St. Romain, is more severe and more ancient than the rest of the building. It is a fine specimen of twelfth century architecture, and, standing alone, would charm one by its fine proportions and perfect example of its period. It is, however, somewhat spoilt by its roof, which is of much later date.

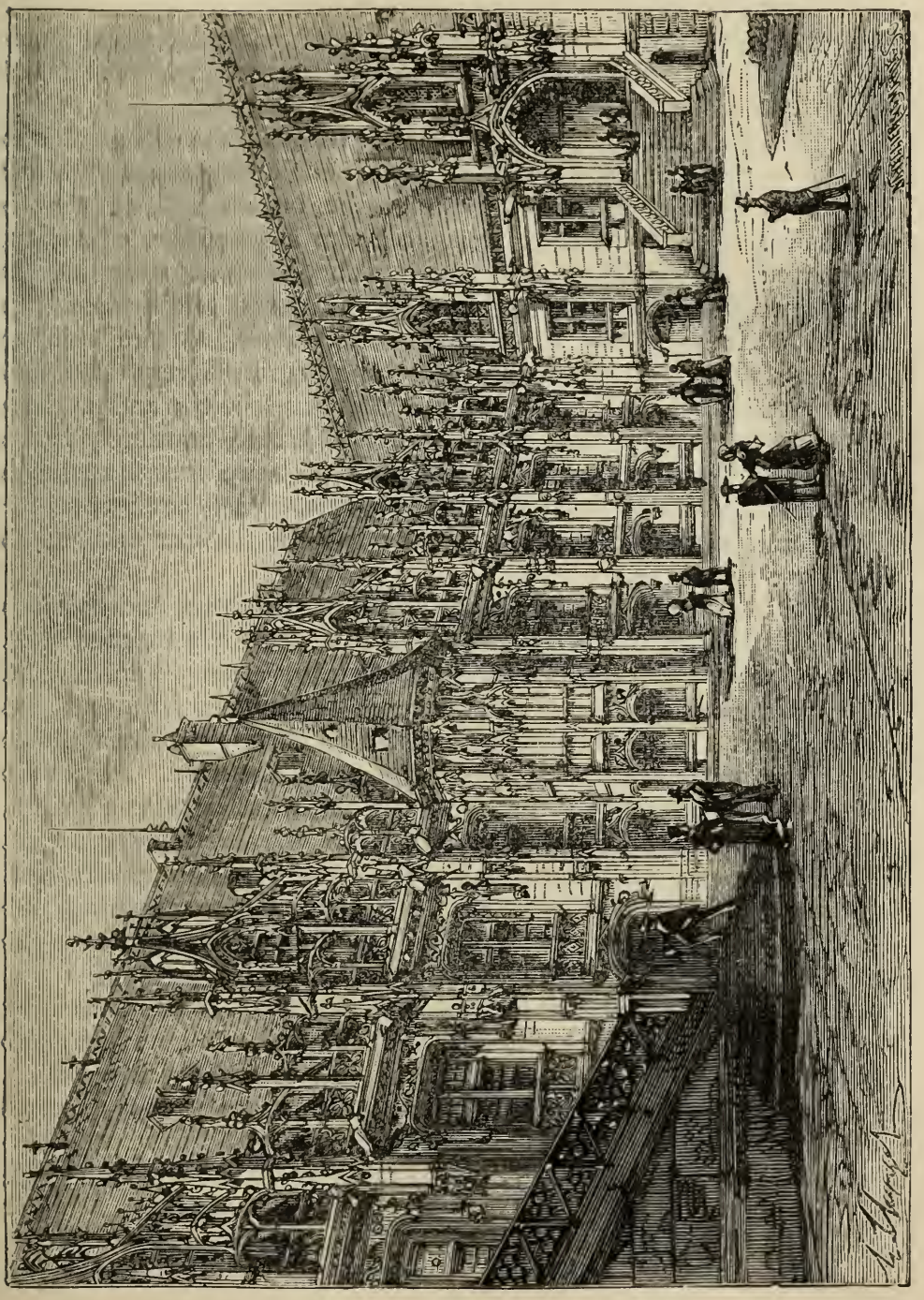
The south tower is a little loftier, and by most people would be considered more beautiful than the north. It is called "La Tour de Beurre," or the Butter Tower, from the fact of its having been built with the money paid by the people for the indulgence of eating butter in Lent. Such, at least, is the tradition. Another and more probable account is that it was paid for out of the dues of all butters brought into the town. For then, as now, all provisions entering Rouen were taxed.

But, in whatever manner it may have been paid for, it is a beautiful and charming tower—a magnificent Mediæval monument. It is 252 feet high, and is surmounted by an octagon ending in a light open parapet. Both towers add much to the stateliness of the façade. The central tower is also of great beauty, but it is surmounted by an open-work iron spire, hideous in itself and utterly out of keeping with the rest of the building. It is the highest monument in France, and it may be seen all over the town and in all the country wide, black and aggressive. It very much spoils the whole effect of the cathedral.

The two side portals, though less ornamented than the great centre doorway, have been considered superior to it in beauty. Above the centre doorway is a magnificent rose window of vast proportions—a true rose, with correct tracery; but, unhappily, the glass is not good, and the effect from the interior is much marred.

The north and south doorways, again, are both of exquisite beauty. They date from the fourteenth century, and are Decorated Gothic,

with geometrical tracery—a combination that here produces the happiest results. These also are supported by open towers of sin-



Palais de Justice, Rouen.

gular beauty. The north doorway, as you pass out of the cathedral, leads to a small, ancient, and most interesting court, where you feel as if you had gone back centuries in the world's history; until you pass yet beyond into the open thoroughfare, and come upon houses,

and men and women unmistakably of to-day—prosy and more or less commonplace. Those people of a bygone age must have had a greatness of mind and correctness of taste not to be met with now; for when our nineteenth century shall be numbered amongst the ages, and our houses and buildings shall be grim and hoary with the dust of centuries, there will be little in them to awaken the admiration of far-off generations that are yet to come.

One of the most striking and beautiful views of the cathedral is to walk down past the south doorway, beyond the extreme east end, and look back upon the whole length of the building. The view is grand and effective in the extreme, with its combination of towers, its beauty of outline, its richness of decoration, its windows magnificent in proportions and tracery, and its flying buttresses full of grace. In short, all the splendour of an elaborately-decorated Gothic building that can scarcely be equalled are here to be found. Every detail and every part appears to harmonize with singular felicity; and nothing offends but that monstrous iron spire, which would absolutely ruin a building of less beauty. Over and over again we found ourselves wandering down that narrow side street, and gazing back upon the vision; and ever as we gazed and grew more familiar with it, its beauty grew upon us.

Of the interior of the church much has been written, and opinions differ. It is of the thirteenth century, and in the Early Pointed style. Its proportions are splendid. The nave is of great length and height. The choir, considered one of the most beautiful in Europe, has double aisles. The transepts are also divided into middle and side aisles by columns and arches similar to those of the nave. Above the main arches of the nave is a second tier of arches forming a gallery, which being without flooring, opens into the aisles, and forms a most effective arrangement. These take the place of the ordinary triforium. Still above it are two more galleries; and again, above all, the clerestory, with its windows: making fine horizontal divisions in the walls of the nave.

The choir dates from the thirteenth century. It is surrounded by fourteen massive and lofty columns, and is lighted by thirteen windows full of beautiful fifteenth-century glass. The toned light is exquisite. It is rich in carved stalls, though many of the designs are singular and grotesque. A great deal of the stained glass is of the thirteenth century and extremely beautiful; but the three rose windows, unhappily, are exceptions; that over the west doorway especially offending the eye.

The choir screen is very poor, and dates from the year 1774. But the fifteenth-century screen opposite the sacristy, and the iron gates are magnificent. Near the choir screen will be found the long lost tomb of Richard Cœur de Lion: who, when he died, bequeathed his heart to Rouen, his body to Fontévrault. Where the heart now is is a matter of dispute. On the one hand we are told that it is

reduced to a fine yellow powder, now to be seen in the Museum of Antiquities: on the other hand, the sacristan of the church will assure you that it lies enshrined within the monument.

The monument itself is interesting, with its long, warlike, yet peaceful-looking figure of the brave king: but the most beautiful tomb in a cathedral that is rich in monuments is that in the Lady Chapel, erected to the memory of Cardinal d'Amboise, and his nephew, Cardinal Leroux, who designed the western porch.

The two cardinals in their robes are kneeling in devotion beneath a rich gilt canopy. Above are the twelve Apostles, and below are the six greater Virtues. Behind the two cardinals is a bas-relief of St. George and the Dragon. The whole is enriched with arabesques; and the monument is probably one of the finest pieces of carving in existence. The bodies of the cardinals were taken by the revolutionists of 1793, and the lead coffins melted, but happily the tomb was spared.

One of the loveliest things in the cathedral is the Gothic staircase constructed in the second half of the fifteenth century, and leading up to the library on the left of the north doorway. It would be difficult to imagine anything of its kind more exquisitely beautiful, graceful and refined.

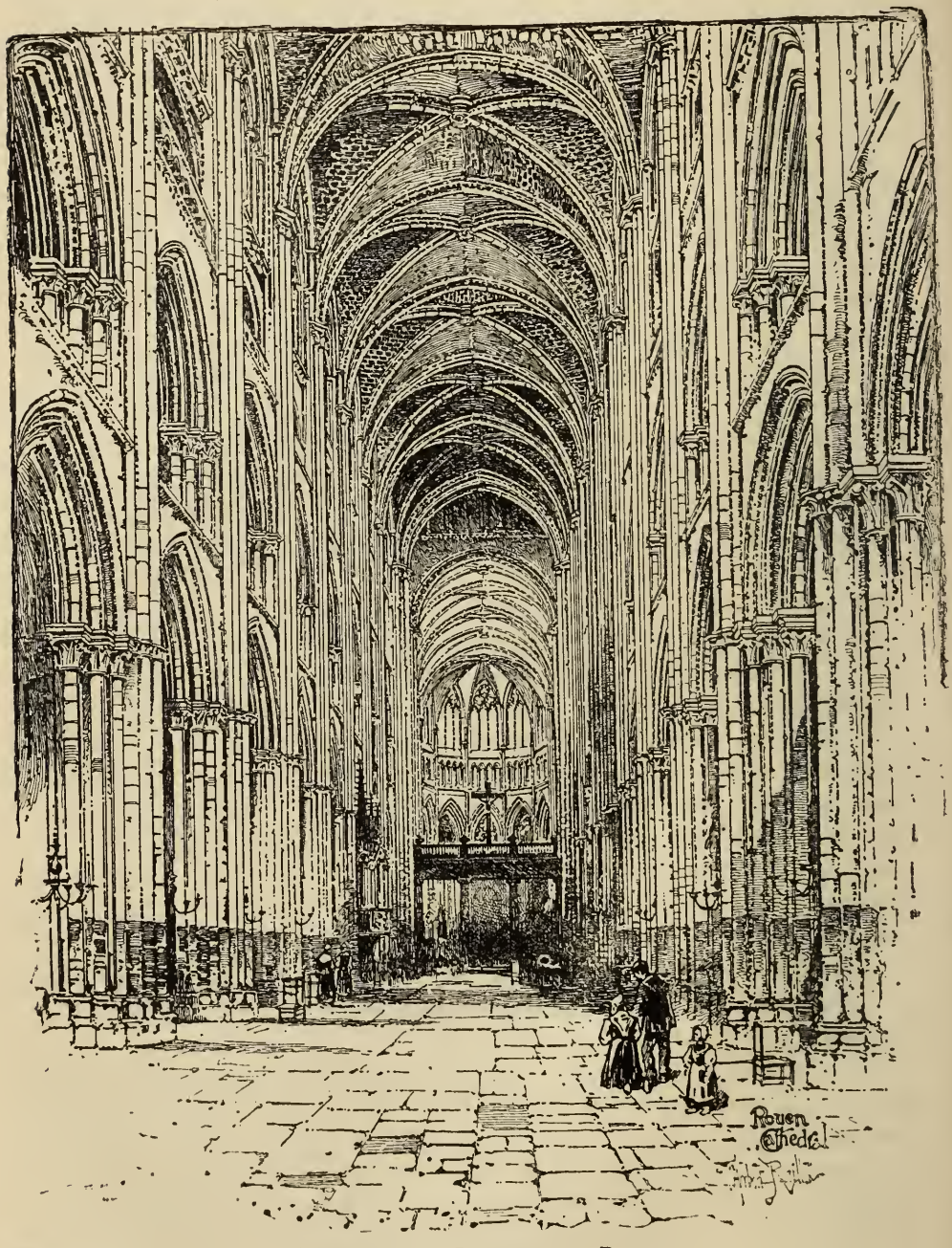
We could have lingered long, but time forbade. The feast of reason and the flow of soul after all must occasionally give place to the less refined realities of life. The clocks of the town had announced the hour when table d'hôte commenced at the Hôtel d'Angleterre. We left the sacred building with all its exquisite monuments, the grandeur and beauty of its columns, its pointed aisles and fretted arches, all the wonderful and interesting associations that carried us so many ages back in the world's history.

We went back to the realities of to-day. Twilight had deepened; the rosy flush of sunset had passed away; the gabled houses were quaintly outlined against a darkening sky. Many an ancient lattice was picturesquely thrown up in vivid relief by a lighted lamp or candle, and all looked more ancient, more romantic, in the softening, concealing darkness of night.

A crowd was hurrying to and fro: men and women who were inheritors of this fair Normandy: "La belle Normandie," as they fondly and proudly and very justly call it. They were all going about their business; interesting specimens of humanity; almost unconscious of the beauty that surrounded them—since familiarity breeds contempt—yet without doubt insensibly influenced by it. For influence is one of the great moving powers of the world, seeing that No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself.

We too hurried on, contrasting the strange scene with the scene we had so lately left on English shores. Wondering at the difference in race and people; and how all the influence in the world would never give to our own countrymen the lightness of temperament, the

sparkle and vivacity, which enables the Frenchman to take life so gaily, never looking on the gloomy side of the picture, never meeting trouble ha'f way.



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL, ROUEN.

Not that we moralised as we passed down the quaint and narrow street on to the quay. There, for a moment, we watched the dark waters of the Seine flowing towards the sea, and in imagination compared it with the same waters which wash the banks of the great far-off Babylon, that, running their course, come hither freighted with the

mighty secrets of life, the weight and woe of human destinies cut short, just as, perhaps, Fortune was about to smile upon them.

We turned away from the chilling darkness, and soon found ourselves in an atmosphere where it was impossible to moralise, very difficult to be sad or subdued. A long, narrow dining-room, blazing with light, buzzing with a quiet but sustained conversation; English and French mixing with strange contrast; savoury odours issuing from mysterious regions where skilled myrmidons in white cap and apron "rule the roast;" the red wine running in sparkling streams, and the paler cider reminding one that we were now dwelling amongst the smiling orchards of Fair Normandy.

Again the scene changed for us.

We went into the cathedral for the second time when the shades of night had fallen. The building was lighted at wide intervals by a few lamps, which cast solemn shadows, and made the interior look vast, weird and mysterious. It filled one with singular emotions of awe and delight, mingled with that distinctly painful feeling the mind ever feels when in presence of anything which appeals to one's sense of the illimitable and the unseen. As we sat and gazed, and watched the lights and shadows, and tried vainly to peer into the deep and dark recesses, suddenly the great organ broke out into the softest, sweetest strains of harmony. There was no service going on; the vast edifice was empty, saving a kneeling figure here and there, bent in an attitude of devotion. The organist was merely practising; or intent upon giving himself and others a rare and exquisite enjoyment.

It seemed to raise us to Paradise. As the soft reeds and flute-like "celestial voice" breathed forth, and went floating through aisles and arches, until the most distant corners vibrated with melody and whispered back their echoes in long-drawn-out, impassioned strains, we fell into a waking trance of almost unearthly rapture. We were spell-bound, mesmerised, nor wished ever to awaken. The air was full of melody. Celestial harmonies were about us. We could imagine heavenly choirs in the sacred building, unseen but heard.

And then nine o'clock struck, and a far-off curfew seemed to ring out upon the air.

The soft, sweet strains died out in whispers; one by one the lights were extinguished; the building was left to darkness and repose, its ghostly monuments, the solemn silence of centuries.

And then the doors were closed and locked. And we found ourselves outside, in the centre of the old flower market, we knew not how or when, gazing upon that magnificent western front, so beautiful at all times, so sublime in the deep shadows of the night; gazing, and dreaming, and wondering.

A TALE OF THE TEMPLE.

WHEN I was a struggling young barrister, living, for the sake of economy, in my chambers in the Temple, a somewhat amusing adventure occurred to me.

It happened that I received an unexpected invitation to eat my Christmas dinner with a rich and testy old uncle—my only male relation—from whom I had once had considerable expectations, but with whom I had quarrelled on the subject of a portionless young lady on whom I had set my affections. He had been very wroth with me on that occasion, had vowed he would never see me again, and had altered the testamentary disposition of his property, leaving me without even the proverbial shilling. But now, after the lapse of three years, he had, it seems, relented, and had written to say that if I would dine with him on Christmas Day at seven o'clock precisely—he was a great stickler for punctuality—he would regard bygones as bygones, and would not only reinstate me in his affections and his testament, but would also provide me, during his lifetime, with the wherewithal that was necessary to enable me to marry the lady of my choice.

This invitation I joyfully accepted, for the small income which I was able to earn at the bar was barely sufficient for my own necessities, and was utterly inadequate to the support of a wife. And so it came about that I lay placidly dozing that Christmas morning thinking about it all; pondering over the past, endeavouring to peer into the future, building castles in the air, and settling everything to my own satisfaction.

It was late when I at last turned out of bed, and found it a blowy, snowy, blustering day. Thrusting my feet into a pair of slippers, I went into the adjoining room for my shaving water; for I always shaved before doing anything else.

But, alas! the fire was out, the water was cold, and I had given a holiday to my "laundress." There was nothing for it but to set to work to light the fire myself.

The operation was a tedious one; the sticks were few in number and not quite dry; a good deal of blowing was required, during which performance my hair would straggle over my face; my hands were black with coal, and every time I put them up to my forehead to replace the vagrant locks they left a trace of their presence there, so that by the time I had finished I was a pretty object.

As soon as the fire began to burn, it was evident that it would die of inanition unless speedily furnished with more fuel. So, picking up the empty scuttle, I sallied forth, with nothing on but my dressing-gown, to the cupboard on the staircase which did duty for a coal-

cellar. Passing the open window on the landing, I became painfully aware of the rigour of the climate, and congratulated myself on having lit my fire before commencing dressing operations, as it would make the room comfortably warm for breakfast.

I was putting coals into the scuttle rapidly when I heard a tremendous bang, which not only caused me to drop a heavy lump of coal on my slippered toes, but made me terribly anxious. Looking round, coal-scuttle in hand, I saw that my worst fears were realised.

The wind had closed my "oak"—the thick, iron-lined, outer door of my chambers, which fastened with a spring lock. And the key was inside!

Here was a nice position for a sentimental lover within measurable distance of the hour which might make or mar his life: outside his chambers on a bitter Christmas morn, with no protection against the cold blast except a dressing-gown and a thin pair of bed-room slippers; and not another soul in the neighbourhood!

The more I contemplated my predicament the more forlorn seemed my fate, and the more frozen I became. Something must be done. But what? My laundress had another key, but how was I to get at her? I couldn't well go in search of her myself, and as my chambers were in the most secluded part of the Inn, it was hopeless to expect that anyone would come within hailing distance of them on Christmas Day. I might shout myself hoarse before anyone would hear me. And I was rapidly freezing. What was to be done?

The only expedient that seemed at all feasible was to go, just as I was (for there is not a curtain or even a window-blind to be found on a Temple staircase), out into Middle Temple Lane and up to the Porter's Lodge under the archway which leads into the Strand. It was a long distance, but I could run it in a minute and a half.

I started, and, congratulating myself that the Inns of Court are deserted on Christmas Day, fled speedily along.

Half the distance had been safely accomplished, and there was not a soul to behold, even at a distance, the extraordinary object which fled along that dull, sober, respectable roadway, and I was beginning to appreciate and enjoy the joke, when, coming to a narrow opening which leads to another part of the Temple, I found myself almost in the arms of three ladies who were on the point of emerging from it!

I cast a shoe with fright, and realised in a moment what was happening.

Morning service in the Temple church was just over, and along that passage and up Middle Temple Lane was a favourite means of exit.

But I sped on in my wild career, not daring to turn my head, for I knew I was being followed by a whole bevy of furred and flounced dames and damsels. What would I not have given at that moment

for a blanket or a rug! However, the distance was increasing every moment.

Hurrah! The Lodge at last!

Knock—knock—kno—ck. Why don't they answer? Knock—knock; bang—bang. Good heavens! There is no one in—and the distance between me and the church-goers is decreasing. Yes, gradually but steadily decreasing. What shall I do? If only I had boots on I would kick the door down, but one slipper is useless for such a purpose. Knock, bang—knock, bang!

"Hulloa, there! What's all that noise about?"

A voice from the inside. The door opens. The porter, who is at first completely taken aback at the apparition he sees, thinks a raving maniac is before him, and would have shut me out. But I don't give him the chance, and nearly overturning him, rush into the house—and am saved. Explanations take place, a messenger is sent for my laundress, who resides somewhere in the neighbourhood, and I am provided with some kind of clothing. After the expiration of half an hour my emissary returns and says with a chuckle:

"Please, sir, Mrs. Tibbits is gone to Richmond, and they don't know when she will be back."

"Didn't you find out when she is likely to return?"

"Well, sir, they did say as how they didn't s'pose she'd be back afore about of a seven or half-past."

And my dinner was at seven o'clock!

I will not detain you with a description of the mental agonies I endured that afternoon. My whole future seemed to depend upon my getting to that dinner. If I were not there by seven o'clock, an unfavourable construction might be put upon my absence which no amount of subsequent explanation would remove. My absence, or even my late arrival would certainly give offence, and would probably imperil my matrimonial prospects.

How many times I sent to inquire if that confounded Richmond-going laundress had returned, I don't know. As the long hours went by my anxiety increased. However, all suspense was at last put an end to at half-past six by the arrival of the key: and as the clock struck seven I was knocking at my uncle's door.

S. C. P.

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE.

THE sun is setting—the faint, December sun. A light wind stirs the boughs of the grand old oaks; the brown leaves remaining upon the twigs rustle, crackle and fall, to lie amidst the moss and acorn cups that carpet the earth. The Berkeley shore lies in shadow, but half the Severn is gilded by a streak of light. The Cliffs of Anst with their white spar are dazzlingly brilliant; but, the sun is setting; dusk will soon approach.

"The Court," built in a Mediæval Age, glows deep red, with harmonious blending of colour at this witching hour. Its gables and turrets and ivy-covered chimney stacks carry one back to the reign of good Queen Bess; and old Dinah standing at the door of her bricked kitchen, is quaintly-enough fashioned for a creation of the same age.

Dr. Driver owned the Court and loved it, but as his busy life did not permit him to cultivate the broad farm lands, he allowed his cousin, Ned Burnett, to lease the place, and live there the unceremonious life of a farmer. For himself, he lived in a cottage up in the village, but spent all the time he could spare with his cousin at the Court. He was a lonely man, and though eccentric, clever enough to have made a mark in the world, had he not been rich enough to be lazy. He was tall and handsome, with large, brilliant blue eyes, that looked you through and through; and pleasant clear-cut features, and he was just thirty years of age. He was proud of his Gloucestershire blood, of his knowledge of country dialect, and the respect and affection of the village folk.

None of these last-named sources of gratification would have been his in London, and he knew it. He hated towns and townsfolk, and, heaven knows how deeply, he detested those fashionable town relations who never would forget he was of the same kin as themselves.

Not even the dusk of evening can hide the scowl which gathers on his face as old Dinah beckons him, from the kitchen door. The cows are standing in the barn-yard, waiting to be milked. Dinah crosses the threshold in her blue gown, quaint in pattern from head to foot, a woman fashioned for the needs of bygone days. That rambling old mansion and she might well be buried together; some such Christian sentence is formed by Dr. Driver, as he crosses the yard.

"They be come, both on 'em," said Dinah with a leer of excessive joy at the Doctor's evident displeasure. "An' that there Miss Frances, she've bin a skimmin' the cream in my dairy. Miss Kitty, she laughed and she kissed me, she did; but she ain't half as pretty as she used to was."

Dinah paused, breathless. The scowling Doctor silently entered the house and strode over the stone passage leading to the parlour. The door was half open. Dr. Driver paused in the dark and stood on the threshold in gloomy silence. The large fire-place was one mass of glowing coal. In its ruddy neighbourhood the room was cosy and cheerful; beyond its reach the shadows and gloom were impenetrable.

A very pretty, yellow-haired girl, sat in the most comfortable corner; opposite to her sat Nora, Ned's wife, comely, matronly, most kindly of women. On the rug lay a small heap of something blue, whence issued a laugh whose merry ring chimed sweeter on Dr. Driver's ear than the clanging of the village bells on Christmas Day.

"Kitty laughs too much," said Frances, severely. "She laughs when proper people want to cry."

Nora laid a gentle hand on the head that rested against her knee, and replied: "Ask Kitty's mother if she laughs too much? I have heard her say but for her bright little Kitty she should have sunk under her many trials."

Yes! Kitty's sense of humour had carried the family over many a rough place; they had lived upon it when the wolf strode to the door and lingered on the threshold. It made Kitty content now to visit Nora with only two shabby dresses in her trunk, while her cousin was gorgeously apparelled. The one was rich, the other poor. They were cousins, these two, and both lived in London, and both had come down to-day to spend Christmas at the Court.

"That is what makes her so fat," continued Frances. She always strove to mould Kitty after her own pattern. She was not at all fat, but only plump and comfortable.

"I like my Kitty just as she is," said Nora, tenderly. "I want to keep her always, and never let her go back to the step-father and unruly boys."

"Oh, Nora," cried Kitty, who was not in the habit of listening, when discussed by her cousins, "I can see a lovely fern blazing away in the fire. Do let me poke it out."

She caught up the huge poker, and knelt before the fire, trying to dislodge the glowing, fossilised fern. Dr. Driver caught sight of a round, rosy face and dark curly hair. He chose this moment to enter the room, his curiosity overcoming his crossness as he looked at the two London cousins, whose visit he dreaded as an intrusion on his own pleasant hours with Ned and Nora, and whom he hated, though he had never seen them before.

"That is Frances, and this is Kitty," said kindly Nora. The Doctor fiercely glanced from one to the other, making a haughty bow.

"Insufferably conceited," thought Kitty. "I'm afraid I shall be obliged to do something to aggravate him."

She continued to poke at the embers. Nothing could have been more calculated to annoy the Doctor. He laboured under the delusion

cherished by all Gloucestershire men, that man alone knows how to poke a fire. He fumed and fidgeted; then with an abrupt "Excuse me," took the poker and dashed so madly at the coals that Kitty rose from the rug and took a seat by Nora on the settle.

Ned came in. Dinah followed with the urn. Kitty noiselessly flitted about, delighted to render service to those she loved. She drew the curtains to hide the shutters, set the chairs so that the clumsy mahogany gained a little grace from position. Doctor Driver followed her with his eyes, inwardly terming her affected and more objectionable than the yellow-haired Frances, who, readily taking her cue, was playing the part of a shy, blushing maiden.

Unconscious Kitty took her seat beside Nora, rendering small services throughout the meal with deft readiness. The angry Doctor was quite ignored, for she broke into unrestrained laughter at one of Ned's witty anecdotes.

"When is William coming, Kitty?" asked Frances, looking at her out of the corners of her eyes.

No more laughter from Kitty, and silence fell upon the party. But Frances adroitly filled the breach and imagined her cousin forgotten.

After tea, Kitty took a book and readily absorbed herself in it. Meantime Frances made herself acquainted with the surface vanities of the simple-hearted Doctor and fed them with zeal.

"You sing, do you not?" she asked.

"Yes, the Doctor sang," Nora replied. "People thought his voice almost equal to Lablache's."

He began to sing, his voice was of immense power and great sweetness—a rare combination—and was under perfect control. He was proud in an innocent way, of his power of making his lower tones vibrate until the glasses in the room would ring. To-night he displayed this power until the air seemed to vibrate round the listeners. Down went Kitty's book with a bang, as she flew into the kitchen, pale and scared.

"Kitty does not mean to be rude," explained Fanny, sweetly, as the Doctor stopped and looked round.

"Oh, Dinah," said Kitty. "Such singing makes me feel so unhappy."

"Ah! a's a grand singer," said Dinah proudly. "A' sings louder than the organ, a' do."

"Oh, Dinah! He's coming in here! put me in the cupboard, do, Dinah!"

Dinah, the kind-hearted, thrust her favourite into a dark corner. In strode the Doctor followed by Nora.

"Oh, she's not here," said Nora. "Don't trouble, Doctor; probably she ran upstairs. What! you are going? Do not forget your promise to take Frances for a drive to-morrow."

"I am going," said the Doctor, darting a piercing glance into the

depths of the dark corner. He went out and banged the door angrily.

Kitty came out of the corner, and cried till she was ashamed of herself. Next day Nora told the Doctor he must not sing again until Kitty's nerves were stronger.

"London girls," he sneered. "The other one, however, seems more sensible."

"Less sensitive you mean," said Nora. "Those yellow-haired girls that blush so easily have often very blunt sensibilities."

Frances came into the room dressed for the drive, her pale hair wound into a coil, her blue eyes under perfect control, her winter costume a Parisian masterpiece. Kitty followed, carefully pinning up the oft-turned blue merino, for she was going to walk with Nora, and the fields were muddy. The Doctor hated shabby dresses. He escorted Frances to the phaeton, pleased with her dainty appearance. Scarcely had he driven out of the yard, however, when Kitty ran up with a "wittle" wrap shawl for Frances. There was something very infectious in her laugh as she ran back to Nora, and the Doctor turned his head just as she lightly vaulted the stile leading to the fields.

"Poor Kitty!" sighed Frances. "She is so untrained. She has had few advantages. She is to be married in April."

"Married!"

"Oh, yes!" said Frances, blandly. "She is very charming to some people."

II.

A WEEK passed by, during which the Doctor saw little of Kitty, though he heard of her from the poor and sick until he was tired.

"You spoil the poor people," said he, roughly, as he came upon her kneading the dough for a sick mother.

"Perhaps so," said Kitty, sadly. "I have had no time to study political economy, as Frances has done. I only know the poor woman is ill, and it is in my power to help her."

But the Doctor waited until the task was finished, then said, curtly, "he was ready if Kitty was."

Kitty found herself alone with him for the first time. She looked up at his grim visage, wondering how Fanny managed to talk to him; then, struck by a mischievous thought, laughed merrily.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked, gravely.

"Old Mother Coles!" cried she, with another merry peal. "You scold me for spoiling the poor. What makes you send her soup every day."

"Oh, her son is a scamp, and is in jail," replied he, hastily.

"So in the meantime you shoulder his responsibilities," said Kitty, slyly. "Is that political economy? Because, if so, I'll study it. I thought it was cruel, and hard and dry."

The Doctor's laugh was so genial at this that it soon placed the pair on a more friendly footing. They talked with ease until Frances came in sight.

"Who is the gentleman with her?"

"William Martin," said Kitty, becoming silent and pale.

"Ah, Kitty! Glad to see you," said the irrepressible William. "Could not keep away from you, you see, after all."

"You have broken your promise," Kitty said, in an undertone. "You will make me hate you."

"'Out of sight, out of mind,' you know," said William, twirling his stick. "I've brought you a little present."

Kitty's fingers would not close over the parcel he strove to press into her hand. When the gift fell to the ground, Kitty walked on unheeding. Frances picked it up and put it in her pocket. William did not see this, but it did not escape Dr. Driver's notice. He felt some interest in the indignant pose of Kitty's head as she marched on alone.

At the stile stood Ned. He was on his way to the apple orchard to find some large Mistletoes for town friends. The apple trees in Gloucestershire have a monopoly with regard to the Mistletoe Bough. The whole party set forth to search for the best, and Ned climbed a tree and began to use his saw vigorously.

"No wonder the Druids admired the Mistletoe," said Kitty to Ned, raising her rosy face just under the bough in tempting fashion.

That William kissed her; that Dr. Driver as suddenly tripped him up, and laid him on his back; that Ned severely told him such behaviour could not be tolerated at the Court, was all the work of only a few seconds.

Kitty's wrath was indescribable, and the tears rushed to her eyes.

"He has some excuse," said Ned's kindly voice, presently; "he says you are to marry him."

Kitty rose and shuddered.

"They worry me so at home," she said, hopelessly. "They are so poor and he promises to do so much for them—but, oh, Ned, I cannot, I cannot. I loathe him."

"Enough," said Ned. "Nora and I will take care you are not sacrificed to your stepfather's cupidity. Make yourself happy."

Kitty ran to her room as soon as they returned. Frances was there holding out a mole-skin purse with golden clasps.

"Quite a valuable gift," she remarked. "Shall I keep it, Kitty?"

"In addition to an album, a ring and a brooch. Pray, please yourself," said Kitty, severely. "Arrange the matter with William."

"I wonder at his infatuation," thought Frances, as Kitty smoothed her soft curls. How shabby the scanty blue dress looked beside her own rich silk.

"Would you not like to be very rich, Kitty?"

"No; I like to manage cleverly on small means."

"William says you shall have nothing to do but enjoy yourself," remarked Frances. "There are twelve servants at the hall."

"I suppose he means balls and theatres," said Kitty. "Oh, Frances, such an aimless life would break my heart."

"Heart!" laughed Frances. "People don't think of their hearts now-a-days."

Tea was ready as the girls entered the room. William deluged his listeners with small talk; nothing could interrupt its flow. All felt glad when the meal was over and music was proposed. Frances played humdrum tunes and William sang. Doctor Driver talked to Ned; and Kitty on the rug at Nora's feet with her head on her cousin's knee sat reading by the firelight.

"When are you going to sing again?" Kitty asked, presently.

"I thought you did not like it," said the Doctor, "and I refrained."

"I like it when you don't thrill your voice," said Kitty. "I can't help crying then."

"She always cries, if she hears a band play, silly child," said Nora.

"Yes! she is very silly," said Dr. Driver, sternly. "People should not be swayed by the feeling of the moment."

"What makes you sing in that way, then?" asked Kitty, feeling goaded to turn the tables on him.

Ned laughed. William, having sung comic songs until his throat was sore, made way for Dr. Driver, who sat down at the piano and confined himself to simple songs requiring few of his deeper notes. But the desire to play upon the feelings of his sensitive listener overcame him, and he broke suddenly into the magnificent chords preluding the "Erl König."

Kitty, frightened and bewildered, followed the song with intense pleasure and some horror till the child's scream, "Der Erl König mir hat," broke with discords on her ear. She rose and fled again to the kitchen, where she helped old Dinah sew a patchwork quilt for the rest of the evening.

"If Doctor Driver thinks you the most affected girl in the world," said Fanny, severely, "I, for one, don't wonder."

"Nor I," said Kitty, meekly. "I think I'll go home soon. They know I am not affected there."

"I suppose you do not mind," said Frances," but I've promised to ride to Chepstow with William to-morrow."

"I hope you will enjoy his society," answered Kitty, in a dreary voice.

"Thank you. I always do," said Frances. "We like the same things."

III.

It was evening; the ringers were practising in the belfry-tower. The chimes with all their changes floated on in perfect rhythm through the frosty air, right away across the Severn to the Berkeley shore.

Kitty was alone in the parlour, for the rest of the party had gone to assist in decorating the Church for Christmas Day. Old Dinah kept guard in the kitchen, as Kitty, only too happy to be alone for awhile, crouched in a corner of the large chimney-piece, reading for the first time the story of "Enid."

The red curtains were drawn, the lamp not lighted, for the flaming firelight was the height of luxury to Kitty. The wild, wintry blast furiously swept round the old house, rattled the shutters and entered at every unguarded crack or cranny. Presently Kitty looked up, the story was finished and she shed a few tears over its happy ending. Then she began to wonder a little at the persistent rattling of one of the window-shutters. It seemed as if someone was striving to break it open. Kitty started to her feet and watched. It must have been her fancy, she thought, for the shutters were perfectly still. Only the blast of the wind could be heard as it approached through the orchard trees.

"I wish I was not such a coward," said Kitty, whose teeth were chattering. She opened the door to call Dinah, when suddenly she heard shrill screams from the kitchen; rough voices swearing at the old woman, and then in the silence that followed, steps came tramping along the passage. Kitty knew she must be seen in another moment.

"Robbers!" she instantly thought. "They know everyone is at church, and have come for Ned's cash-box. Oh! Dr. Driver told him he'd be robbed some time."

Quickly she sped across the hall, up the wide staircase to Ned's room where she knew the cash-box was hidden. Ned had received his quarterly rents the day before; but, heavy as it was, Kitty crept softly with the box towards the back stairs which opened into the barn-yard. She paused at the head of the stairs to listen.

The heavy footsteps of three men were heard, the parlour-door was thrown open, and loud voices swore at the darkness of the room. Feeling the house unprotected, they were careless about the noise they made. Kitty heard the men poking the fire, and calling to one another to light the lamps in order the quicker to finish their business. She crept softly down the stairs, feeling her way in the darkness, and terribly afraid she might come upon some ruffian ere she could find the door. She meant to find her way to the village and send back help. She thrust aside her fears for old Dinah's life, which would have paralysed her with horror, and creeping across the yard, fled

like a lapwing over the fields. But there was more light than she thought. She was seen, held fast, and a hand was placed over her mouth.

"Don't scream!" said Dr. Driver sternly. "You town-bred girls always scream in an emergency, and risk your own and others' lives by such folly."

As he spoke he removed his hand to let Kitty speak.

"They are in the house—three of them," said poor, trembling Kitty. "I am afraid old Dinah is murdered, and I ran away."

"Of course," he sneered; "but you must come back again now. I will see to the ruffians. You must creep into some out-of-the-way corner and wait till I come for you."

"They will kill you," cried Kitty, in an agonised whisper.

"Come, come!" said Doctor Driver, as they came to the back door; "you must try and have a little self-control. I would stay with you if I could, but those ruffians must be punished. Let me put you in a safe place. There is no time to waste," he continued; "they are up in Ned's room, I swear."

"I will hide," replied Kitty, releasing himself from his grasp, as he drew her into the house.

"Three to one," said Dr. Driver, pausing to look at the blood-hound that was madly pulling at his chain. "I wish Ned would keep a dog one might let loose on occasions. That creature would be worth a dozen men at this moment. Now, Miss Kitty, just show me the back stairs."

He followed Kitty to the head of the stairs, waited to see her conceal herself in a dark corner, then strode away to defend Ned's property, having armed himself with a revolver, which was always kept loaded in a certain cupboard. Kitty, shivering with dread, again descended the stairs and went out of doors. Still hugging the heavy cash-box, she rushed towards Nep, whose deep bay was usually enough to make her tremble. As she knelt beside the huge animal he began to whine and hold his massive neck still that she might untie him. She tore her fingers on the rough leather strap, and the dog snarled impatiently at her tardiness. At length the buckle was unfastened; Nep bounded into the house with one long stride, and Kitty fled back to her hiding-place, sick with horror. She could hear Dr. Driver's voice mingled with Nep's deep baying, cries and oaths. After a long interval, Dr. Driver came back to her, took her in his arms, and carried her downstairs.

"Now don't faint again," he said abruptly. "It's all over and no great damage has been done. Two of the men are caged, thanks to Nep, and in an hour they will be in custody. What have you got there?"

Kitty recovered her senses if not her power of speech. She silently lifted the cash-box and placed it on the table.

"Oh!" said the Doctor, opening his eyes. "I thought the third

man had got off with it. Stay here while I go and look after the old woman, will you?"

He came back saying that he had found Dinah frightened to death but not hurt, and that she would be herself in a few minutes.

"I am afraid you are hurt," said Kitty. "What's the matter with your wrist?"

"I have got an ugly cut on it," said the Doctor. "No! don't look. You will faint again, and it is as much as my life is worth to take my finger away again."

"Wait a moment; I'll attend to it," cried Kitty, running lightly upstairs. The Doctor listened eagerly, fearing as time elapsed, she had again fainted.

"Those town-bred girls," he was beginning, when his eyes fell upon the cash-box. He was bound to confess to himself that Kitty had probably saved Ned's rents. Presently she returned.

"I can sew up the cut," she said, "and bandage it for you. My father made me learn because the boys cut themselves so often."

"Nonsense!" ejaculated he. "*You* indeed!"

But ere the Doctor had got over the surprise which her words had awakened, Kitty had threaded the surgical needle and was at work with a deft, firm touch.

"Is it comfortable?" she asked, timidly, conscious of his intent, amused watching.

"Cleverly done!" The Doctor sat down suddenly. He had lost blood and was faint for the first time in his life. Kitty quietly handed him some water, and while he drank it, disappeared.

"Where have you been?" he asked, gruffly, some five minutes later

"I went to tie up Nep," she replied, meekly.

"*You* let him loose?"

"Yes! I thought you wanted help."

"Oh, law! oh, law!" moaned a dismal voice beside them. Turning round they saw old Dinah, bent double with fear and horror, her old eyes turned up, the corners of her mouth drawn down. Kitty began to laugh and cry together.

"Come, come," said the Doctor kindly, "such a brave little woman must not disgrace herself by hysterics."

Ere Kitty could answer—the party returned from church. Dr. Driver in a few vigorous words related the evening's adventures, and Kitty found herself exalted to the position of "heroine." Nora held her fast in her arms as she told her what a loss the rents would have been to Ned. But while the story was told over and over by the parlour fire, no one knew that the face hidden in Nora's breast was covered with tears.

Next morning was Christmas Eve, and by Nora's entreaty Frances went for a drive with William. It was going to be a busy day, and William was troublesome indoors.

It was a frosty morning, the sun shone over the meads by the Severn ; the white cliffs were brilliant in rainbow hues.

"Dear me!" said Frances. "How I should like to cross the river and get some spar."

"Let's drive to Beachley. If the tide serves, we'll go over and get a boat-load," replied William, amiably.

Kitty was making mince-pies at the pastry table, comfortably near the fire. Nora at the lattice-window read aloud some old recipes from her grandmother's book of cookery—old Dinah scrubbing upstairs was to be heard bumping the pail and brush energetically. Everything was comfortable-looking. Dr. Driver, who followed a peep in at Nora's window by an advance into the kitchen, entered with the remark :

"I like to see a woman at home in a kitchen."

"When women have their rights," said Kitty mischievously, "Frances says they won't ever go in their kitchens at all."

"What will they do instead?" asked Nora, smiling.

"Read Euripides and Homer in the original," replied Kitty, as she rapidly snipped the crust off the pies.

"Well, I like a woman to do both. I can read Euripides with Nora, who is almost as good a linguist as I am, but I can't make mince pies," said Ned.

"People ought never to rush to extremes," said Nora, who usually was ready with a platitude, having much brain-power but no originality.

"If you can leave your mince-pies," said Doctor Driver, "I should be glad if you would drive with me on my rounds. You want a little bracing air, and I'm going up on the 'Chase,' to-day."

"Oh!" cried Kitty, dancing with delight. "Up as far as the Twelve Apostles! What a treat!"

"You will see the Wye," said Nora, unpinning the apron which protected the blue merino from the flour.

Away flew Kitty for the quaint little hat and jacket which had seen so many winters' wear, and bright red plaid shawl of her mother's—which made a diversion in her favour.

Kitty was allowed to drive, to her unbounded delight. The country was beautiful; past the village cross, up the lane, till the village lay far behind in the valley, and Jehosophat might pause for rest in a rut made for the purpose. Far up the hills, past woods whose pines and yews contrasted with the bright hollies, and birch trees were delicately outlined against the sky. In the valley, beyond the meads the red waters of the Severn rolled their dangerous course.

"There is some idiot trying to cross from Beachley," said Doctor Driver, pointing to a small boat tossing on the river.

They drove on again until the heights were reached and the broad

"Chase" came into view. Here and there the country roads diverged and small cottages were hidden in cliffs or woods; here the Doctor paid his welcome visits. At length his business was finished and he drove across the Chase to show Kitty the view from the heights above the Twelve Apostles. There in the valley winds the limpid Wye, making a horse-shoe of the land, encroaching here and there and babbling on. Now shallow, barely wetting the pebbly bed, now silent and deep, terrible in her judgments of any rash enough to contemplate fording the stream. The oaks and elms of the wooded heights sway back and forth with majestic air, seeking listeners to their oft-told stories of days of old, of glories they have seen, of Tintern lying in the valley below the cliffs.

Doctor Driver loved his country and loved to relate its legends, and to descant on its beauties. In Kitty he had a sympathetic listener. But all at once, as they drove on together, happily, he said quietly:

"Kitty, will you be my wife?"

"Oh!" cried Kitty, opening wide her eyes. But she made no further reply.

"I wonder if you know that I am usually considered an impatient man," said Doctor Driver presently. "I want an answer."

"You think me silly and affected," said Kitty suddenly. "Do you think I would marry anyone who held such an opinion of me?"

"I hope you would not," said Doctor Driver, laughing. "My opinion is evident when I ask you to marry me."

"It's very queer of you, I think," said Kitty, frankly. "There's Fanny, ever so rich and handsome."

"Do you think, then," he said, quietly, "that it makes no difference whom one marries? Would it be the same to you to marry William Martin or me?"

"I shall never marry William," cried Kitty. "Never!"

"And I," said Dr. Driver, "am equally resolved never to marry Fanny. I have no objection to live single all my life. It is a very happy lot."

The Doctor spoke with some bitterness. Kitty felt as uncomfortable as when he thrilled the air with his lower notes.

"I'm old-fashioned," she said, with a great effort. "I know I have a heart, and I—I believe in love."

"Thank you," said Dr. Driver. "I like to hear the truth, even when it is so unpleasant as that. Look a little further, Kitty. Try and believe that I, too, have a heart. I began to love you the moment I heard you laugh in the gloaming."

"Yet," said Kitty, "you looked so fiercely at me. I thought you detested me. It vexed me at first—because——" Kitty became silent, and coloured as she met the Doctor's keen glance.

"That was only my way," said he. "I did not mean to be disagreeable. If you knew me better, you would take it as a compliment when I scowl at you."

Kitty laughed merrily, as the Doctor intended she should. They were on the most friendly footing ere the Court was reached.

"I say, Driver, that foolish fellow, William, has crossed to Beachley in a small boat with Fanny, and, I fear, can't get back."

"Wind's against him," said the Doctor, looking at the vane. "I'll drive to Beachley, and see what's the best thing to do."

He drove away, and Kitty ran upstairs to take off her hat. She climbed up into the old-fashioned window-seat, and looked after the dog-cart. Doctor Driver, turning the corner, looked up, and saw her, and waved his hat. Kitty nodded back, and leaned out of the window in a day-dream, the wind in her curls, her rosy cheeks glowing.

An hour later, in came Fanny and William. They were in the highest spirits, and laughed, making interminable small talk the order of the day. They had not been to Beachley at all, but had driven to Chepstow instead.

"I hope Driver won't go on the water after you," said Ned. "It gets dark early, and he is too good a man to be drowned in a wild-goose chase."

A little thrill of horror came over Kitty at these words. She crept away to the window-seat, and looked across the fields to the Severn. A wind was blowing—the rough waters splashed over the banks; soon the meads would be flooded. Would Doctor Driver trust himself on this treacherous river? Kitty shuddered with dread at the thought, and, heedless of the chill of the frosty air that entered freely through the leads of the lattice window, kept her place with frightened eyes that strove to pierce the gloom. William and Fanny, in the hall, kept up a perfect Babel of small-talk. Nora with Ned had walked to the village, to call on the new rector. Old Dinah came in to stir the parlour fire.

"Oh, Dinah!" said Kitty. "Do you think the Doctor will go on the river?"

"Sure to!" answered Dinah—who loved to contemplate the tragical. "There was a young man as I knowed up strit (street). Well, him was took just thicumtheer way. A' went on the water and the bwoat it upset—and his corpses was picked up drowned dead at the ferry."

"Oh, Dinah, don't, don't!" cried Kitty in an agony of horror—a blind horror of the darkness which would come over her life if Dr. Driver should never reach home alive again. She cowered down in the window seat, cold, wretched and miserable, still with her face bent to the frosted fields beyond which, mayhap, the cruel Severn made havoc with human life. It grew dark—the river could no longer be seen—one by one the apple trees with their boughs laden with mistletoe were buried in the gloom. Kitty had no heart to move, her tired eyes in vain strove to pierce the darkness which covered the turbid waters beyond the meads.

The hours passed. Eleven had struck upon the frosty air from the church tower. Ned and Nora had long been in. Kitty had never ceased to watch.

Dr. Driver, driven by the sound of William's voice to avoid the hall, entered the parlour and poked up the fire. His keen eye soon caught sight of a little heap of blue in the high window-seat. Two strides took him to Kitty's side.

"Your nerves are very faulty," he said, severely, as she gave a start of relief at his unexpected appearance.

"What have you been doing with yourself?" he continued, sitting down beside her. "You are cold and trembling, and I vow—yes, I vow you have been crying."

"Did you go on the water?" asked Kitty, rubbing away the tears.

"I did not go to Beachley at all. I caught sight of William on the high road—and not wishing to meet a fool, I turned down a lane and went to see some patients," said he. "One of them was very ill and wanted all my attention."

A little sob of relief from Kitty. A sudden leap of joy to the Doctor's heart.

"Kitty! Were you afraid for me?" he asked, taking her, cold and trembling as she was, in his arms. He drew her to the warm fire-light, and held her there before the glowing coals. Kitty, in a panic of terror, lest the Doctor should read her very heart of hearts, would have fled from this keen scrutiny—but she was not permitted. The Doctor's arms closed round her.

At that moment the bells rang out on the frosty air. Twelve o'clock had struck; it was Christmas Day.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men," said Dr. Driver reverently, as if interpreting the message of the bells. "Is there a happier man on earth than I am to-night, my darling? Let us try and make the world happier for others."

And Kitty nestled close in the strong arms and felt that she had found her haven. And the bells rang out their happy peal to the end, and earth and sky seemed full of the glad tidings of Christmas.

BY THE GATES OF THE SEA.

Bright amber bars o er all the West,
With glow as deep as ruddy ore;
The weary coming home for rest,
And children's laughter from the shore.
The mellow chimes of evening bells,
The ships receding o'er the main;
The tear-dimmed eyes and sad farewells
Which have been and will be again.

A seven years' child upon the sands
Amidst the gold-lipped mystic shells,
Which murmur of fair sunny lands
Where wondrous music ebbs and swells.
With growing joy his eager ear
Hears songs from isles in emerald seas,
And strains of heavenly music clear
Of his life's far-back mysteries.

An agèd man with silvered hair
Gazing into the glowing West,
With wistful eyes and yearning prayer
For peace and home and perfect rest;
Slow searching through the years gone by
For some sweet, tender, long-lost strain;
And vainly calling with a sigh
On friends who answer not again.

Two children on the shining shore,
Amidst their palaces of sand;
Two worn ones by the cottage door,
The open Book of God at hand.
Two lovers happy, loyal, brave,
And knit together for the strife;
Two resting in one peaceful grave,—
So thus goes on the round of life!

Alexander Lamont.

M. ELLEN STAPLES. R. TAYLOR.

"SHALL I GIVE YOU BACK YOUR FREEDOM?" UTTERED HESTER.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1890.

THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IV.

HESTER'S ROMANCE.

THE years went on, in their quiet cottage, till Alfred was of an age to be ordained. Lucy's education was well finished, and Mary's was progressing. Mrs. Pepper they heard from occasionally: she liked much an Oriental life, but two children, born to her, had both died.

The last vacation before taking orders, when Alfred came home he brought a friend to spend it with him. The family had walked to meet the coach, and when it came, and Alfred jumped off it, a gentleman about his own age followed him.

"My friend, George Archer," he said, "you have heard me speak of him. And you, George, have heard of my sisters. These are two of them, Hester and Lucy."

What a handsome man he was, this stranger! Tall, fair, gentlemanly; with a low, sweet voice, and a winning manner. He is often in Hester's mind's eye, as he looked that day, though so many, many years have now gone by.

Is like attracted by like? Rarely. No two persons could be much less similar than Hester and George Archer; and yet they were attracted to one another. He seemed formed to be one of the ornaments of the world, she to be of use: she was of slight figure, with a pleasant face and dark hair, but of beauty she had none; he was indeed one of the most attractive of men. Hester thought so then, and now, that she can judge dispassionately, she thinks so still. We must all have our romance in life, and Hester's had come for her before that vacation was over. He spoke out at once to Mrs. Halliwell.

She had no objection to give Hester to him, provided they would wait; but it seemed to her, she said, that they might have to wait

for years. Hester's heart beat, and her colour went and came. Wait! if she waited till her hair was grey, what of that? To see each other occasionally, to be secure in each other's love, was not that sufficient bliss? She did not speak, but her colour deepened.

"Of course, my first year's curacy must be passed upon hope," said Mr. Archer, "but when that is over, why should luck not give me a living, as it does to other clergymen?"

"It does not always give one," observed Mrs. Halliwell. "You have no interest."

"Neither interest nor fortune," returned Mr. Archer. "My father is dead, and what came to me has been spent upon my education. Something like Alfred."

"And Hester has nothing. She will have five hundred pounds at my death; but, were that to happen to-morrow—"

"Oh, mamma!" interrupted Hester, "do not talk of that."

"My dear child, talking of my death will not bring it on. I was about to say that were the money at your command to-morrow, you could not marry upon it."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Archer. "I should be the last to take Hester from a good home unless I had one equally good to offer her. I trust it may be a better, whenever it shall come."

"We have been accustomed to a better, until the last few years—if, by that, may be understood a more wealthy one," said Mrs. Halliwell.

"Then I am to have her?" said George Archer.

"In prospective," answered Mrs. Halliwell with a smile. "And when you can show me a certainty of bread and cheese, you shall have her in reality."

Mrs. Halliwell was called from the room, and he cast his arms around Hester. "My darling, will you bear to wait for me?"

Bear to wait for him! Her glowing cheek told how willingly, though her tongue was silent.

It had been long talked of, and was now recently arranged, that the good old rector of Seaford, Mr. Coomes, should take Alfred Halliwell as curate. He was growing feeble now, and required one. The prospect of having Alfred close to them was delightful to his family, more especially to Mrs. Halliwell. It came to be hinted that this plan might be changed: who first thought or spoke of it, Hester never knew; *she did not:* but it was whispered that instead of Alfred Halliwell being curate of Seaford, it might be George Archer. Mrs. Halliwell was startled. She did not like it. She spoke to Alfred; but he, lighted-hearted and good-natured, was ready to sacrifice anything and everything for his friend and his favourite sister. Mrs. Halliwell could not remonstrate openly against it: her old-fashioned notions of the extreme courtesy due to her son's guest forbade it: but she spoke privately to Hester: she thought the latter might have stopped it with a word. *That word Hester could not bring her heart*

to speak. "Selfish! Selfish!" It is the reproach that has clung to her conscience since. Ay, and with cause.

"How Aunt Copp will be deceived, when she comes home and finds you are engaged!" exclaimed Lucy to her sister. "She will not crow so much over her fortune-telling, for the future. Hester, I do believe she will be quite angry. She is so fully persuaded that you are not to marry."

Hester smiled, a quiet smile of happiness.

The time came, and they were ordained together. The Reverend Alfred Halliwell was appointed to a curacy in a remote district of North Wales, and the Reverend George Archer to Seaford.

He came. He read himself in on the last Sunday in Lent, the day preceding Passion Week. Seaford Church stood about midway between the village and the gates of Seaford Park. It was called the old church, in contradistinction to the new one, St. Jude's. It was a small, low, unpretending edifice, only one monument within it and one handsome pew, and they belonged to the Earls of Seaford. As they walked into church that day, which will ever be one of those left in Hester's memory, she did not look up, but she saw by intuition that George Archer was in the reading-desk, and the rector in his pew. Mr. Coomes, for that day, was only one of the congregation.

He began the service, and they stood up. It is one of the few remembered moments of agitation in Hester's life; her breath came fast, she saw nothing, and her face was white as the snow outside. It was a very early Easter, that year, and the snow lay on the ground. In poor Hester's foolish fancy, she thought everybody must be looking at her; as if the congregation, in their curiosity to look at and listen to him, regarded her! He had a persuasive voice, low and silvery, and though it did not tremble he was certainly nervous in his new position, for his bright colour went and came.

When Hester gathered courage to look round, she forgot everything in astonishment. Against the wall, under the one monument, facing the side of the pulpit, was the pew of the Earls of Seaford, with its brass rods and crimson curtains. During the four years they had gone to Seaford Church (previously they had attended St. Jude's) that pew had always been empty, and now it was occupied! Standing at the end, was a young lady, just budding into womanhood, very beautiful; at the other end was a man of fifty, short, but of noble presence, with wrinkled brow and grey hair; and, standing between these two, were four lads, of various ages, from ten to sixteen or seventeen. The young lady's eyes were fixed on George Archer's face, and Hester could not take her gaze from hers. It was the sweetest face she had ever seen, with its exquisite features, its delicate bloom, and its dark, spiritual-looking eyes: it is the sweetest face that ever rises to her memory. Hester glanced round at the large

pew at the back, near the door : it was filled with male and female servants, some of them in the Seaford livery, and she knew then that it was the Earl of Seaford, his sons, and his daughter, the Lady Georgina.

Mr. Archer was to dine that day with the Halliwells, and Hester thought that he would accompany them home from church. But they had been in half an hour, and dinner was waiting to be served, when he entered. Lord Seaford had detained him in the vestry.

"I was surprised to see them," remarked Mrs. Halliwell. "They must have come down late last night. I thought they were not in England."

"They have been abroad these three years, the Earl told me," said Mr. Archer.

"And they have not been here for much longer than that. I did not recognise one of the children, and scarcely Lord Seaford. Was he pleasant with you?"

"Very much so. He invited me to the castle, and said Lady Seaford would be glad to see me, but that she was a great invalid."

"A very fine family," resumed Mrs. Halliwell. "The daughter is beautiful."

"Is she?" said Mr. Archer.

"Did you not think so?"

"To tell you the truth," said he, smiling, "I was thinking more about myself, and the impression I made, than taking in any impression likely to be made on me. My thoughts were running on whether I pleased Mr. Coomes and the congregation."

"I only trust Alfred will succeed as well," returned Mrs. Halliwell. "Was it your own sermon?"

"It was indeed," he said, earnestly. "I have written many. I used to write them for practice at college."

Oh, those Sundays!—for Mrs. Halliwell generally invited him—their peaceful happiness will never be erased from Hester's memory. The intense, ecstatic sense of joy they reflected on her heart is a thing to be remembered in silence now, as it was borne then.

They went to church that evening, and Hester attended better than in the morning; more courage had come to her. The family from the castle were not there. After service Mr. Archer overtook them in the churchyard, and drew Hester's arm within his. Mrs. Halliwell expected him to walk with her: she was quite of the old school and very particular with her daughters. However, she walked on with Lucy, and they followed, he pressing her hand in the dark night.

"Hester, dearest," he whispered, "shall I do?"

"Do?" she repeated, scarcely heeding what he meant, in her weight of happiness. For it was the first time they had walked thus familiarly together.

"Shall I do for a clergyman, think you? Shall I read and preach well enough for them?"

He knew he would, there was conscious triumph in his voice as he spoke; what need for Hester to give him her assurance? Yet she tried to speak a timid word of congratulation.

He clasped her closer to him, he held her hand with a deeper pressure, he halted in the narrow path, and, raising her face to his, kissed it lovingly. "Oh, Hester, my dearest, how happy we are in each other!" he murmured; "how bright will be our future!"

Mrs. Halliwell called to them. Perhaps she missed the echo of their footsteps; perhaps she thought they were lingering too far behind. "Mr. Archer, are you and Hester not walking slowly? It is very cold." So he raised his face from hers, and they went on close to Mrs. Halliwell and Lucy.

"Oh!" cried poor Hester once, after the lapse of many years, "let me believe that he did indeed love me! I am an old woman now, and have struggled through a lonely life, carrying with me a bruised heart. But let me believe that my dream was real; that during its brief lasting, George Archer's love for me was pure and true."

Alfred Halliwell fell ill in June. He had been ailing ever since he went down to Wales. The weather, when he travelled, was severe, the place bleak, and he wrote word home that the cold seemed, from the first, to have struck on his chest and settled there. In June he grew worse, and wanted his mother to go down.

"I shall send you instead, Hester," said Mrs. Halliwell, after pondering over his letter.

The hot colour flushed into Hester's face, and she looked up to remonstrate. What! send her away from Seaford, miles and miles, where she could never see *him*, hear his voice, or listen for his step! But a better feeling came over her, and the hasty words died away upon her lips: how could she refuse to comfort her sick brother?

"Hester is thinking of Mr. Archer," laughed Lucy. "Now, Hester, don't deny it; I can see it in your face. Look at it, mamma. She is indignant that anyone should be so unfeeling as to banish her from Seaford."

"Hester must remember that she is, in a remote degree, the cause of this illness of Alfred's. Had he been curate here his indisposition would have been well attended to at first, and not suffered to get ahead."

Mrs. Halliwell's tone was mild, but Hester's conscience smote her. Lucy saw her downcast look.

"Mamma," she said, "let me go to Alfred instead of Hester."

Mrs. Halliwell shook her head. "It is not only that Hester is three years older than you, Lucy, but she has a steadiness of character and manner which you want. I can trust her to travel alone; you are too giddy."

"Why, you know we always said that Hester was cut out for an old

maid, with her starched notions and sober ways," retorted Lucy, who was feeling angry. "I'm sure it is a mistake, her being married."

"A very good mistake," said Mrs. Halliwell.

So it was settled that Hester should visit Wales, and George Archer spoke with her about his prospects the evening before her departure, spoke sanguinely. They were sitting in the garden. He was indulging a chimera; though neither thought it one then.

"Do not deem me vain, Hester," he said, "if I tell you something I have never told you yet. It is our approaching separation that draws it from me."

She turned her grave but sweet dark eyes towards him.

"I believe that Lord and Lady Seaford took an extraordinary fancy to me. Something more than usual."

"I think they must have done so," answered Hester. "They had you with them so frequently during the fortnight of their stay."

"When they return here for the autumn—as they purpose doing—perhaps this liking for me may be improved to bring forth fruit," he went on. "He, Lord Seaford, may give me a living."

"Oh, George!" she exclaimed, "I think he is sure to do it The idea never occurred to me before."

"The worst is, these noblemen have so many calls upon their patronage," continued Mr. Archer. "If one place drops in, a dozen candidates are ready for it."

"Your uncle is a clergyman, George," proceeded Hester; "could he not help you to something?"

"You mean my uncle Elliot. No, he could do nothing. His living is a good one, but he has a large family of his own. Clergymen can rarely help one another to preferment. If the Earl will only take me in hand, I shall want no one else's help. I think he will."

"I am so glad you have told me. It will be something to dwell upon while I am away. There's mamma calling to us—that it is getting dark, and we are to come in."

He rose, and strained her to him, before they entered. "Mind you don't forget me while you are away," he whispered.

"No, no," she replied, dashing away a few tears from her eyes.

The Seafords had gone to town, after Easter, for the season and for Lady Georgina's presentation. It was said that she bore away the palm of beauty at the drawing-room; that George the Fourth, sated though he was with ladies' charms, had spoken publicly of her exceeding loveliness.

When Hester reached North Wales she found Alfred very ill; but what he chiefly wanted was care—he called it coddling. He lodged with a mining overseer and his wife, who were attentive to him, in their rough, free way, but who had no knowledge of the cares and precautions necessary in illness. Hester's heart smote her when she saw the want of all comfort in the place, the contrast it presented to the home he would have had at Seaford.

However, what was to be done now was to get him well. And Hester was one of those right and rare spirits who set themselves to make *the best* of present exigencies, to meet and grapple with whatever duties may arise. As it has pleased God, in His infinite wisdom, to allot to us all some especial talent of usefulness (though many, in their carelessness, go to their lives' end and never find out their own), so Hester believed that her humble one lay in being useful to others, particularly in nursing, tending and soothing the sick. She entered heartily on her task, and with the aid of warm weather, and another and a better Aid, she got Alfred round again. By the end of August he was quite well, and she went back to Seaford.

It was a long journey for her: travelling in those days was not what it is now; but she halted at Shrewsbury. They had some very distant acquaintances living there, of whom they knew little more than the name, but Mrs. Halliwell had written to ask them to receive Hester, which they kindly did for a night, both going and returning. She left Shrewsbury early in the morning, and reached Seaford about eight in the evening.

She never doubted that George Archer would be waiting for her, but they came flocking round the coach-door, and he was not there. Mrs. Halliwell, Lucy and Mary. It was a lovely summer's night; the harvest moon near the full; but a dark shade seemed to have fallen on Hester's spirit.

She did not inquire after him—when the heart truly loves, it is always timid—yet they talked a great deal during the walk home, and at supper. Chiefly about Alfred: the situation of his home, the sort of people with whom he lived, his parish duties, and the family at Shrewsbury; it seemed they never would tire of asking Hester questions, one upon another. But when she and Lucy went up to their bed-room for the night, she put on an indifferent manner, and inquired if they saw much of Mr. Archer.

"Not so much as when you were at home, of course," laughed Lucy, "his attraction was gone. And, latterly, very little indeed. Since the Seafords came, he is often with them. And he is reading with Lord Sale and Master Harry Seaford. They go to him every day."

"Are the Seafords at the castle, then?"

"They came in July. Parliament rose early; the King went to Brighton, and all the grandees followed his example, and left town. We get all the 'fashionable intelligence' here now, Hester."

"Did he know I was expected to-night?"

"The King?"

"Don't joke, Lucy," pleaded Hester, "I am tired. You know I meant Mr. Archer."

"Yes, he knew it. We met him this morning, and Mary told him, and I wonder he did not go with us to meet the coach. Perhaps he is dining at the castle; the Earl asks him sometimes. Very dangerous to throw him into the society of that resplendent Lady Georgina."

"Dangerous?"

"Well, it would be, I should say, if he were not cased-round with your armour."

"How much more nonsense, Lucy? One so high and beautiful as Lady Georgina!"

"That's just it, her beauty," laughed Lucy. "I will defy the lowliest curate in the church to be brought within its radius, and not be touched with it. Nevertheless, I suppose you will have your adorer here to-morrow morning, as constant as ever."

And he came. No one was in the room, and he clasped Hester to his breast and kissed her tenderly. Her two months' absence were amply repaid by his looks and words of love.

"I thought to have seen you last night," she whispered.

"So did I, Hester. I had been copying some music for Lady Georgina, and went to the castle with it, after dinner; and the Countess, and some of them, kept me talking till past ten. I was thunderstruck when I took out my watch, for I did not think I had been there an hour."

In his coveted presence, with his tender words, with his looks of love, how could Hester conjure up uneasy thoughts? And what had grated on her feelings in this last speech, she drove away.

Mrs. Halliwell had made acquaintance with the housekeeper at the castle, a reduced gentlewoman, whose husband had also been in the army. Mrs. Stannard had taken tea with them once or twice, and it was from her Lucy got what she styled her "fashionable intelligence."

One morning, about a week after Hester's return, Mrs. Stannard called, and asked if she would like to go to the castle and teach English to the little Lady Ellen Seaford. This child, the youngest of the family, had a Swiss governess, but no one, just then, to teach her English. Lady Seaford was lamenting this in the hearing of Mrs. Stannard, and the latter thought of Miss Halliwell.

Hester was electrified—frightened—at the proposal. "I am not competent to be a governess; I don't know anything; I never played a note of music," she breathlessly said.

"It is only for English, my dear," said Mrs. Stannard, "I am sure you must be quite competent to teach that. They don't want music or any other accomplishment. Your going to the castle for two or three hours a day would be quite pastime, and you would be paid well."

So it was decided that Hester should go, each day, from half-past two to five, to give Lady Ellen Seaford English lessons. She entered on her duties the following Monday, and went up to the old castle with fear and trembling, wondering what real lords and ladies were like in social intercourse, and how they would accost her and what she should answer; wondering whether she should have to sit in a saloon, all gilding and mirrors. "The goose I was!" poor Hester said afterwards. The schoolroom was plain, almost bare, and the lords and ladies were just like other people; free and unceremonious

in their speech and manners to each other, as the children had been in her own home.

The Countess was a tall, grand woman, quiet and reserved. None of her children resembled her except Viscount Sale. She was wrapped in a thick shawl, though the day was hot, and looked pale and ill. One day, in that first week, Lady Georgina came into the room while the little girl was reading, and Hester rose up to receive her.

"Don't let me disturb you," she said, in a pleasant, careless tone. "Miss Halliwell, I presume. Has my sister nearly finished reading?"

"Yes," interrupted Lady Ellen, shutting the book of her own accord. "I have read a page, and that's enough. The words are hard, and I don't like it."

Hester knew that the child had not read half enough, but she doubted whether it was her place to differ from her, and at that early stage did not dare to do so. She stood in hesitation.

"Miss Halliwell," said Lady Georgina, bringing forward a huge portfolio, "do you know how to mount handscreens? Look at this pair which I have begun. I am not making a good task of them. Can you help me? Mademoiselle knows no more about it than this child. Ellen, let my paintings alone."

As it happened, Hester did know something of the work. She had a natural taste for it, and for drawing. When a child, she would spend hours copying the landscapes on an old china tea-set, and any other pretty view that came in her way. George Archer once found one of her old drawings, and kept it, saying he should keep it for ever. Poor Hester!

She told Lady Georgina she believed she could assist her, but that the little girl had only just begun her studies.

"Oh, her studies are of no consequence for one day," remarked Lady Georgina, in a peremptory tone. "Nelly, dear, go to Mademoiselle; my compliments, and I am monopolising Miss Halliwell this afternoon."

The child went out of the room, glad to be dismissed. She disliked learning English, and had told Hester that her French lessons were much less difficult to her.

"Do you cut the gilt paper out on a trencher or with scissors?" asked Lady Georgina. "For the flowers, I mean."

Before Hester could answer, a merry-looking boy of fifteen, or rather more, looked into the room, and then sprang in. It was the Honourable Harry Seaford.

"I say, Georgy, are you in this place? I have been all over the house after you. Who was to think you had turned school-girl again? What are you up to, here?"

"Why do you ask?" inquired Lady Georgina, without raising her eyes from the screens.

"Papa wants to know if you mean to ride with him this afternoon, and he sent me to find you."

"No," she replied. "Tell papa it will be scarcely worth while, for I must begin to dress in an hour. And I am busy."

"You can go and tell him yourself, Madam Georgy. There's Wells with my pointer, and I want to catch him."

"Where is papa?"

"Oh, I don't know; in the library, or somewhere."

He had vaulted down stairs as he spoke, and Hester saw him tearing after the gamekeeper.

Lady Georgina left the room, Hester supposed to find the Earl. When she returned, she halted before a mirror that was let into the panel between the windows, and turned some of her flowing curls round her finger. Her sylph-like form, her fair neck and arms—for it was not the custom then for young ladies to have these covered, even in morning dress—her bright hair, her patrician features, their damask bloom, and the flash of conscious triumph lighting her eye! Very conscious of her fascinations was the Lady Georgina Seaford. She caught Hester's earnest gaze of admiration, and turned sharply round.

"What are you thinking of, Miss Halliwell?"

The question startled Hester. She supposed, in her timid ignorance, that she must confess the truth, when a noble lady asked it. So she stammered out her thoughts—that until she saw the Lady Georgina, she had not imagined it possible for anyone to be so lovely.

"You must be given to flattery, in this part of the world," was the young lady's answer, with a laugh and blush of conscious vanity. "Another, here, has avowed the same to me, and I advised *him* not to come to the castle too often, if there were a danger that I should turn his head."

Who was that other? A painful conviction shot over Hester that it was Mr. Archer.

Lady Georgina seemed quite a creature of impulse, indulged and wilful. Before she had sat twenty minutes, she pushed the drawings together, said it was stupid, and they would go on with it another day. So the little girl came back again.

At five o'clock Hester was putting on her bonnet to leave, when Lady Georgina re-entered the room, in full dress. They were going out to dinner. An India muslin frock, with blue floss trimming, a blue band round her slender waist, with a pearl buckle, pearl side-combs in her hair, a pearl necklace, and long white kid gloves. It was the mode of dress then—and a very pretty one.

"Nelly," she said to her sister, "I want you to give a message to the boys." And she bent down and whispered the child.

"William or Harry?" asked the little girl aloud.

"Oh, Harry," replied Lady Georgina. "William would not trouble himself to remember."

She left the room again. What the purport of her whisper was, of course Hester did not know. Mademoiselle Berri, the Swiss governess, was in the room then, writing, and when Lady Ellen ran

to the window and got upon a chair to lean out of it, she quitted the table, pulled the child back, and said something in French, very fast, as it sounded to Hester, and the child replied equally fast. She could not understand their language, but it seemed to her that they were disputing.

"Miss Halliwell will hold me then," said the little girl in English, "for I *will* look. I want to see Georgy get into the carriage. Please hold me by my frock, Miss Halliwell."

Hester laid hold of the child by the gathers of her buff gingham dress, and the governess began to talk to her. Hester laughed and shook her head. "What does Mademoiselle say?" she inquired of Lady Ellen.

"Oh, it's about a little girl she knew falling out of a window and breaking her *reins*. It is all a *conte*, you know; she says it to frighten me. What do you call *reins* in English? There's Georgy; she has got on mamma's Indian shawl."

Hester bent forward over the head of the child. The bright curls of Lady Georgina were just flitting into the carriage, and something yellow gleamed from her shoulders. It was the Indian shawl. The Earl stepped in after her, and, following him, in his black evening suit and white cravat, went George Archer. Hester's heart stood still.

"I wish dear mamma was well enough to go out again," sighed the little girl. "Georgy has all the visiting now."

She remained looking after the carriage, and Hester remained holding her. They saw it sweep round to gain the broad drive of the park. Lord Seaford was seated by the side of his daughter, and *he* opposite to her.

CHAPTER V.

THE LADY GEORGINA.

Autumn and winter passed away, and it drew very close to the anniversary of the period when Mr. Archer first became curate. There was no outward change in his position with regard to Hester; to the few in the family confidence the Reverend George Archer was still the engaged lover of Miss Halliwell. But a change *had* come, and they both knew it.

It seemed that a barrier had been gradually, and almost imperceptibly, growing up between them. He was cold and absent in manner when with Hester, and his visits to Mrs. Halliwell's were not frequent. He appeared to be rising above his position, leaving Hester far beneath. Mr. Coomes was ailing, rarely accepted the dinner or evening invitations sent him, and since the Earl's stay at the castle, much visiting had been going on. So the county gentlemen would say "Then you will come and say grace for us, Archer," and he always went. It would sometimes happen, when they were going a distance, as on the above day, that Lord Seaford

invited him to a seat in his carriage; and he was often now a guest at the castle. It has been said he was a handsome man; he was well informed, elegant, and refined; as a clergyman he was regarded as, in some degree, an equal by the society so much above him, and he was courted and caressed from many sides. Thus it was that he acquired a false estimation of his own position, and ambitious pride obtained rule in his heart. But not for all this was he neglecting Hester. No, no; there was another and a deeper cause.

Easter was later this spring than the last, and on its turn the Seafords were to depart for town. Hester's duties at the castle would conclude the Thursday in Passion Week; and it may be mentioned, that over and above the remuneration paid her, which was handsome, the Countess pressed upon her a gold and enamel bracelet, which Mrs. Halliwell said must have cost a small fortune. Hester has it still; but it is not fashioned as those worn now.

Thursday came, Hester's last day, and after their early dinner she set off to walk to the castle. A rumour had reached her that afternoon, that Mr. Archer had thrown up his curacy. His year had been out three weeks, but he had agreed to remain on, waiting for something better, at a stipend of a hundred a-year. Hester had been looking forward to the departure of the Seafords, with a vague hope that the old, loving, confidential days might return; and now this rumour! It seemed as if there was to be no hope for her in this cruel world, and she sat down to the lessons of little Ellen Seaford as one in a troubled maze. Before they were over Mademoiselle Berri came in, and told the child to go to her mamma: some visitors had called who wished to see her.

"You will stay to take de thé wid me dis afternoon," said mademoiselle, who had now made some progress in English.

"No, thank you," answered Hester. "My head aches, and I want to get home."

"You cannot go till madame la Comtesse has seen you: she did say so. Ah, but it is triste in dis campagne! I have de headache too, wid it. I shall have de glad heart next week to quit it."

"You have always found it dull, mademoiselle?"

"As if anyone was capable to find it anyting else! Except it is de Lady Georgina. And perhaps de Earl, wid his steward, and his shooting, and his af-fairs. But for de Lady Georgina, she does keep herself alive wid flirting: as she would anywhere. She is de regular flirt."

"But then she is so very beautiful."

"Eh bien, oui, if she would dress like one Christian. But de English don't know how; wid deir bare necks and deir curled hair. Dere is no race in de world who ought to put on clothes, Miss Halliwell, but de French women."

"Lady Georgina always looks well," sighed Hester. Was it a sigh of jealousy?

"For de fashions here, she do," answered mademoiselle, shrugging her shoulders at the "fashions here." "But she has got de vanity! And not no mercy. She has turned de head of dat poor young minister, and ——"

Something like a great spasm took Hester's throat. "Do you mean Mr. Archer?" she interrupted.

"To be sure. One can see dat his heart is breaking for her. And she leads him on—leads him on. I do tink she loves him one little bit—but I only whisper dis to you, my dear, for de Earl and de Comtesse would give me chivy if dey heard me. But when she has amused herself to her fancy, she will just laugh at him, and marry. It is her fiancé dat is de handsome man."

Hester's heart leaped into her mouth. "Is Lady Georgina Seaford engaged?" she burst forth.

"You do seem surprised," cried the French woman. "She is to have Mr. Caudour. He is my Lord Caudour's eldest son, and is now abroad wid some of the embassies. Dat is why he has never been here. He is some years older dan she, but it is de good *parti* for her, and dey will be married dis summer."

Mademoiselle talked on, thinking Hester listened, but she heard no more. A weight was taken from her heart. And yet, with what reason? For to couple a lowly curate with the Lady Georgina Seaford was ridiculously absurd, and her good sense told her so. She had to wait to see the Countess; it was the evening she gave her the bracelet; and it was nearly six when she left the castle.

The evening is in her memory now. It was still and balmy, and the sun was drawing towards its setting. She took the slanting cut through the park, which was the shortest way, and, in hastening along the narrow path, where the trees hung thickly overhead, she came face to face with Mr. Archer. He was going there to dinner: she saw it by his dress. He shook hands in a constrained manner, and then there was a silence between them, as there often had been of late. Some power—Hester has never thought it was her own—nerved her to speak.

"I wanted to see you. I am glad we have met. We heard this afternoon that you had given up your curacy. Is it so?"

"Yes," he answered, breaking off a switch from one of the trees, and beginning to strip it with the air of a man who knows not what he is about, while he kept his face turned from Hester.

"Then you have heard of another," she said.

"I have accepted what may lead to something better than a curacy," he replied, tearing away at the stick. "The post of resident tutor to the young Seafords."

Was it a spasm, now, that fell on Hester's heart? Ay, one of ice. "Then you leave here; you go with them?" she faltered.

"When they leave next week I shall have to accompany them. We must temporarily part, Hester."

"Temporarily!" Calm as was Hester's general nature, there have been moments in her life when she has been goaded to vehemence. This was one of them. "Let us not part to-night without an explanation, Mr. Archer," she broke forth. "Is it me you love, or is it Lady Georgina Seaford?"

The red light from the setting sun was on them, for, in talking, they had moved restlessly to the opening in the trees, and the landscape lay full around, but the warm colour did not equal the glow on his face. Hester *saw* he loved the Lady Georgina: far more passionately than he had ever loved her. He stood in hesitation, like a guilty coward, and no words would arise at his bidding.

"Shall I give you back your freedom?" uttered Hester: "I see we can no longer be anything to each other. I wish, from my heart, we had never been."

"Hester," he exclaimed, suddenly taking both her hands, "you would be well quit of me. A man with the unstable heart that mine has proved would never bring you happiness. Curse my memory, in future, as you will: I well deserve it."

"But what do you promise yourself, to have become enthralled with *her*, so immeasurably above you?" was wrung from Hester, in her emotion.

"I promise myself nothing. I only know that I can live but in her presence, that she is to me in the light of an angel from Heaven. May it forgive my infatuation!"

"You need forgiveness," whispered Hester. "To indulge a passion for one who will soon be the wife of another."

"Of whom!" fiercely asked the young minister. The glow on his face had faded, and his lips were so strained that the teeth were seen—he who never showed them.

"She is to marry Lord Caudour's son."

"Ah, that's nothing, if you mean him," he answered, drawing his breath again. "She has told me she dislikes him. And though her father desires the match, he will not force her inclinations."

"Then you wish your freedom back from me?" And poor Hester's lips, as she asked it were as white as his own.

"Pardon my fickleness, Hester! I *cannot* marry you, loving another."

"Then I give it you," she continued, in a sort of wild desperation. "May the wife you choose never cause you to regret me."

"Thanks, from me, would be like a mockery," he whispered; "I can only hope that you will find your reward. Let us shake hands, Hester, for the last time."

She held out her right hand. And he took it in his, and bent down his forehead upon it, and kept it there. Hester saw his lips move; she thought he was praying for her welfare. *He* pray!

They walked away in opposite directions; but soon Hester stopped, and looked after him. He was striding on. He never turned; and,

as he approached the bend in the path, which would hide him from her sight, he flung the little switch away, with a sharp, determined gesture, as he had just flung away her love. Oh, the misery that overwhelmed that unhappy girl! The dreadful blank that had fallen on her! She cast herself upon the grass, where no eye could see, and sobbed aloud in her storm of despair.

She heeded not how long she lay. When she got up, the sun had set; it was dusk; and she staggered as one in drink, as she departed. In passing the rectory, a sudden idea occurred to her, and she went in. Scarcely in a fit state for it; but there might be no time to lose. Mr. Coomes was drinking his tea by firelight.

"Why, my dear," he said, "is it you?"

She sat down with her back to the fire, not caring that even his dim eyes should see her face in the faint light. And then she told him what she called for—to beg him to take her brother as curate.

"My dear, it is true that Mr. Archer is going to leave me; but who told you of it?"

"He told me so himself."

"He is a changeable fellow, then. He said he did not wish it immediately known; not to anyone; and requested me to keep it secret. I have been thinking of your brother."

"Oh, Mr. Coomes," she urged, "you know it was through me he was driven away from here, to give place to Mr. Archer. Since his illness that thought has rested like a weight on my conscience. He has been ill again this winter; the bleak air there tries him. If you would only receive him as curate now?"

"We will see about it," answered Mr. Coomes. And Hester rose to go.

"Hester," he whispered, in a kindly voice, as he followed her to the door, "how is it between you and George Archer? Serene?"

"That is over," she said, striving to speak indifferently. "We have bid each other adieu for ever."

"If I did not think this! He is losing himself like an idiot. God's peace be with you, my child."

The Reverend Mr. Archer went up to town with the Seaford family; and Mr. Halliwell, whose year of curacy was out, in Wales, took priest's orders, and became curate of Seaford. Monotonously enough for Hester the time passed until August, when the Seafords returned to the castle; but Mr. Archer was not with them, neither was the Lady Georgina. It had all come out to the Earl. Hester, who had heard nothing and knew nothing, was at the window when the carriages drove by; watching for them, if the truth must be told. The two carriages passed very quickly, and she did not recognise a single face, save little Ellen's, who was sitting forward. She looked for Lady Georgina's; and she looked for *his*, but she saw neither. Near the park-gates, that same evening, she met the child

and the governess. Hester entered, and sat down with the latter on one of the benches, and the little girl ran about in glee; it was pleasant for her, after the confinement of London. Hester's throat was twiching wildly; but she would not ask after him. She did, however, inquire, in a roundabout way, of Lady Georgina, hoping that might lead to his name.

"De Lady Georgina, oh, she is well enough," answered Mademoiselle Berri. "You know dat she did marry yesterday."

"Marry," echoed Hester, her heart standing still.

"It was de quietest wedding possible, because Madame la Comtesse is so ill. De Lady Georgina, she is all for de show, and she was not pleased; but de Earl would not hear of having de world. Dey had but ten people at de breakfast besides de family."

"Are they—is Lady Georgina come back with you?" gasped Hester in her terrible suspense.

"Come back wid us! Ma foi! She did go away wid her husband after de breakfast. Dat is anoder of your barbarous English customs. Wid us, when a young girl marries, she does stay in her own house wid her mother for some days, but you send de poor young thing all away by herself.—Lady El-lène, you will have de face like one chou rouge if you do jump like dat."

Hester could bear it no longer. "Who has Lady Georgina married?" she asked in a low tone, turning her face away as if watching the movements of the little girl.

"My dear, who should she marry but de Honourable Caudour? He was fiancéd to her dis long time—I do not know your word for it. He does doat upon her, and thinks her de vraie ange. Dey are gone to Lord Caudour's chateau at Riche-monde, and den dey are going on to de Continent. Ah, Ciel! if I was but going too! Dis England will kill me. I have got de vrai mal du pays at my heart. Mi Lady El-lène, donc! reste plus tranquille."

Sunshine stole over Hester. She nerved herself to speak in a careless tone; with her face still turned to the child. "Has Mr. Archer come back with the young Seafords?"

"What, de young minister? Not he. He will never enter de doors of dat family more, and we have anoder tutor. My dear, don't you know that de Earl turned him out?"

"No," uttered Hester.

"It was—let me see—I think in June; I know de shivers of de dreadful English spring had passed. The Vicomte, young Sale, heard a great chatter, like a dis-pute, between his sister and de minister, and he looked into de room and heard him say dat he would forgive her for saying what she did, and she was laughing den, and he had got her hands and was kissing and clasping dem like one great donkey as he was, poor fellow, for he might have seen dat she was but amusing herself wid him. So Lord Sale—I do think he did it for mischief, for de Earl had come in den, and Mr. Archer had gone out

—asked his sister when de wedding was to be, and why she did not write to Mr. Caudour to tell him she had jilted him for de parson. Wid dat de Earl rose up his ears and asked what was meant. I do not know what Lord Sale said, but de Lady Georgina she was in de furious rage wid him for days after. De Earl went into de library and sent a servant for Mr. Archer to go to him dere."

"Did he go?" cried Hester breathlessly.

"My dear, how could he help himself? And when he got dere he showed himself de double donkey, for he did avow to de Earl dat he *loved* de Lady Georgina—dat he loved her better dan life."

"And the Earl—what did he say?"

"What would he be likely to say in such a case?" returned the governess. "Dey are all full of sang froid, all de English nobles. He just poohed him down with contempt, and said his services were not required in de house after dat hour, and paid him his money, and wished him good morning, all cool and civil. Dat's what de Earl did."

"So he left!"

"He saw de Lady Georgina before it, though. And she treated him as civilly as de Earl had done, and said she was very sorry but it was no fault of hers, and dat he should not so have mistaken her. He said dat his heart was breaking for her—could she not see dat it was? She replied dat she should always retain a pleasant memory of his flattering sentiments towards her, but she could not say any more. Oh, my dear, she was a vain girl, she did think men were but made to make homage to her. She went, all gay, to a soirée at the Duchess of Gloucester's dat same evening, widout one care for de killed heart of dat poor young clergyman. Child, you are looking pale, it is dis heat, you should untie your bonnet-strings."

"I feel the heat very much," murmured Hester.

"Oh, but talk of pale faces, you should have seen his when he left de Earl's," added Mademoiselle. "I was coming in from a walk wid de little girl and met him in de hall. He held out his hand to me to say good-bye, and I looked up at his wan face—it was one tableau of miserie. 'Where are you going to dat you say farewell?' I asked, for I did not yet know what had happened dat morning. 'I know not where I am going,' he replied, 'away from here.' And while I was in de surprise he was gone."

"Where did he go?" asked Hester.

"My dear, who's to know? If you ask my opinion, I should say dat he just went to de nearest river, or to an empty room and a charcoal fire. I know if my face betrayed what his did, I should not be anxious to live. I did pity him wid all my heart. And he was so handsome, so much de scholar and de gentleman."

"Was he never heard of again at the Earl's?" resumed Hester in a low voice.

"Never. He was not likely to be. Are you going, my dear? Dere is no hurry."

"Mamma will be waiting tea for me," said Hester. "I shall see you another day."

She walked away with her bruised heart. All through that spring and summer she had unconsciously cherished a hope of the period when he should return to the castle. As she reached home Lucy met her.

"Hester," she whispered, "we have been hearing some news from Mrs. Stannard. George Archer has made such a fool of himself."

"Ah!"

"Made an offer to the Earl for Lady Georgina, or something of the sort: Mrs. Stannard never came quite at particulars, she says. And the Earl turned him out of the house that same day."

"Mademoiselle Berri said he had left," returned Hester, knowing she must answer something. "I have just seen her in the park."

"I fear you have long been grieving after him," went on Lucy, "though you persist in being so silent over it. Your coolness with each other, and the breaking off of the engagement, which you never satisfactorily explained, is accounted for now. What an idiot he must be, to have dared to think seriously of Georgina Seaford! I am sure this news must cure you. Never give a thought to him again, Hester; he is not worth it."

"I do not think of him," answered Hester, almost fretfully. She could not bear that even Lucy should suspect her misery.

"What a good thing it is, Hester, as things have turned out, that your engagement was not made public, especially at the castle. Lady Georgina and Mr. Caudour were married yesterday."

"Mademoiselle said so. What did Mrs. Stannard call here for? To impart this news about Mr. Archer?"

"She came with a message from the Countess: that little Ellen Seaford would be ready for you whichever day you would like to begin."

"I will not go to the castle again," said Hester, quietly; "that is over."

"Hester," said her mother to her, as she kissed her forehead when they parted for the night, "you can think over resuming your duties with Lady Ellen Seaford. My opinion, my dear child, is that it will be pleasant to yourself to do so, rather than the contrary, as it will serve to occupy your mind. But if you still say it cannot be, perhaps we can substitute Lucy."

Mrs. Halliwell said no more, only kissed her again, more affectionately than usual, but Hester understood. She lay awake all that night, battling with her unhappiness. Towards morning she began to ask herself whether it was not *her duty* to go again to the castle, rather than idly to resign herself to sorrow. It is true she disliked to mingle with them again: to be in the scenes that reminded her so powerfully of *him*. Her mother had said that Lucy might possibly be her substitute; but Lucy's education had been of a higher order

than her own, for she had shown much aptitude for all polite accomplishments, and Hester knew that not very patiently would Lucy sit down to teach the rudiments of English to a child. The salary received from Lady Seaford was a consideration to them, for her brother, what with his illness and the pitiful stipend of his first year, had been obliged to encroach considerably on their means. Mary's education was also now expensive. They had tried the plan of Lucy teaching her, but it did not answer; both were impatient: a sister can rarely exert the necessary authority over a sister. Added to these reflections, Hester felt that the occupation would really serve to divert her mind.

So she resumed her visits to the castle. Mr. Archer's name was never mentioned there by anyone. Mademoiselle Berri seemed to have exhausted her stock of information that first afternoon, and did not again recur to the subject; Hester steadily went through her duties at home and abroad, and thus got over the days as she best could: but at night she would turn about upon her sleepless bed and moan, "Oh! that he would come! that he would come back to be forgiven!"

And the days, and the weeks, and the years went on, and they never heard of him, and he never came.

(*To be continued.*)

SONNET.

The whole day long the bright stars shine and burn,
And yet I see them not.—Thus, oh, my God,
Thou shinest on my soul, and I, dull clod
Of earth, from Thine undying light still turn.
All night fresh dews from Heaven fill mine urn:
Pure dews of peace and prayer and faith, which I
Forget until the sun has drunk them dry.
For one pure drop in vain my soul doth yearn,
Athirst and faint with sin and arid doubt.
And all my life, from birth until the grave,
Within my heart a secret world I have,
And as I am, so is it foul or fair.
Alas! why do I look so little there?
Alas! why do I look so much without?

JULIA KAVANAGH.

ROBERT BROWNING.

"Stand still, true poet that you are,
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us. When afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star."

A SMALL packet of old yellow letters lies before me as I write, the writing in faded ink. The packet is labelled "from Robert Browning," the letters are addressed to my father, the Rev. W. J. Fox. The date of the earliest of these notes is the year 1833. My father was, at that time, editor of the *Monthly Repository*, a periodical which he endeavoured to raise from its original denominational character into a first-class literary and political journal. It was the forerunner of many similar such, but in its day it stood almost if not quite alone, and like other forerunners was distinctly in advance of its time.

In this periodical did Mr. Browning's earliest work "Pauline" receive its first public recognition in the April No. of the volume for 1833, that is, immediately on publication; while "Paracelsus" was welcomed in the volume for 1835, also as soon as published. The articles were both from the pen of Mr. Fox.

I will quote a few sentences from them, but they would both well bear republication in full. In the first article, the one on "Pauline; a confession," after a careful analysis of the young author's mental stages and their progress, Mr. Fox continues thus:—"The poem, in which a great poet should reveal the whole of himself to mankind would be a study, a delight, and a power, for which there is yet no parallel; and around which the noblest creations of the noblest writers would range themselves as subsidiary luminaries.

"These thoughts have been suggested by the work before us, which, though evidently a hasty and imperfect sketch, has truth and life in it, which gave us the thrill, and laid hold of us with the power, the sensation of which has never yet failed us as a test of genius. Whoever the anonymous author may be, he is a poet. A pretender to science cannot always be safely judged of by a brief publication, for the knowledge of some facts does not imply the knowledge of other facts; but the claimant of poetic honours may generally be appreciated by a few pages, often by a few lines; for if they be poetry, he is a poet. We cannot judge of the house by the brick, but we can judge of the statue of Hercules by its foot. We felt certain of Tennyson, before we saw the book, by a few verses which had straggled into a newspaper; we are not less certain of the author of 'Pauline.'"

Mr. Fox proceeds to give many quotations, interspersed with admiring and appreciative comments; towards the close of the

article he makes some small criticisms, after which he concludes with the following words—"In recognising a poet we cannot stand upon trifles, nor fret ourselves about such matters. Time enough for that afterwards, when larger works come before us. Archimedes in the bath had many particulars to settle about specific gravities, and Hiero's crown; but he first gave a glorious leap and shouted Eureka!"

This full and complete recognition of the first effort of the young poet was never forgotten by Mr. Browning, and was often, and often, referred to by him in later life with touching affection and gratitude. He says in a note (my third in date), "I can only offer you my simple thanks, but they are of the sort that one can give only once or twice in a life. All things considered, I think you are almost repaid if you imagine what I must feel. As for the book, I hope ere long to better it." And, again, in another note, still of the year 1833: "I shall never write a line without thinking of the source of my first praise, be assured."

I have omitted to mention the earliest notes of my treasured little packet. The first is a most characteristic one introducing himself to Mr. Fox, and the next is written to accompany a packet of twelve copies of "Pauline" (the recipient has written outside "the Pauline parcel has arrived"). One of those twelve copies lies before me at this moment, in its original dull drab binding; a second was sent to Mr. John Stuart Mill, who was, at that time, writing some admirable articles for the *Monthly Repository* for my father, signed A (or Antiquas) on the Greek Philosophers. Mr. Browning's signature to his contributions was Z. Mr. Mill, apparently at my father's request, wrote a review of "Pauline" for the *Examiner*, which that paper declined; and Mr. Mill in his note (which lies before me) says that he shall send his review to *Tait*. Those were the days before Mr. John Forster was literary editor of the *Examiner;* even, I think, before Mr. Forster had come to London. I know not what has become of the other ten copies, but can only hope they have been treasured as mine has by me.

In the March of 1835 "Paracelsus" appeared, and was noticed by Mr. Fox, before the end of that year, in the *Monthly Repository* in a careful and appreciative analysis. He speaks of the author as having in this work, "essayed the solution of one of those great enigmas, which human life in its different phases presents."

He continues: "His 'Paracelsus' is, not a personification indeed, but an individualisation of humanity, in whom he exhibits its alternate conditions of aspiration and attainment. Truly here is something for the mind to grapple with; but the labour is only of that species which accords with the proper enjoyment of poetry, and which raises that enjoyment to its due degree of loftiness and intensity. Paracelsus left that sort of mingled reputation which exactly suited the author's purpose. It is neither too bad for a blessing, nor too good for a curse."

After copious quotations the article concludes thus: "Our task has been performed rather as expositors than as judges. To take up a book, and that book a poem, with real mental matter in it, is a novelty which calls more for announcement than for criticism. Would that we had oftener occasion for the implied praise and admiration which belong to the record of such a fact. . . . Yet, though possessing little of that species of stimulus which gains sudden popularity, there is abundance of a higher and stronger stimulus in this poem. We now leave it to speak for itself, and fancy its coming into the world, as Brutus did into the rostrum, with the appeal, 'Censure me in your judgments; and awake your senses that you may the better judge.'"

After long years of neglect the public at last responded to that appeal. Those who have learned to admire Browning's noble poetry have indeed had to "awake their senses," in order to be able to appreciate his pregnant and thoughtful work.

Immediately before the publication of "Paracelsus," Mr. Browning writes to Mr. Fox, that he hopes his poem "will turn out not utterly unworthy your kind interest, and more deserving your favour" than anything that Mr. Fox had yet seen; adding, "it will never do for one so distinguished by past praise to prove nobody after all." This note seems to be in reply to one from Mr. Fox, who had obtained for him an introduction to Moxon, who however, could not be prevailed on to publish "Paracelsus." Mr. Moxon had, apparently, burnt his fingers with the early works of two poets, both of them since taking first rank, and he begged to decline even inspecting Mr. Browning's poem. Messrs. Saunders and Ottley too, who had previously published Pauline, I believe at the author's own risk, were applied to in vain; when Mr. Fox bethought him of that ultra liberal, Effingham Wilson, whose name finally, is found on the title page of the first edition of "Paracelsus."

After the notice of "Paracelsus," Mr. Browning writes: "Sardanapalus could not go on multiplying kingdoms, nor I protestations—but I thank you very much."

Four of Mr. Browning's shorter poems made their first appearance on the pages of the *Monthly Repository*. In 1835 "The King," which was introduced afterwards in "Pippa Passes," as one of Pippa's songs; those songs that effect such momentous changes in the current of the lives of the hearers, all unconsciously to the little silk-winder of Asolo passing by. "Porphyria," which re-appears in the first number of Dramatic Lyrics (original edition) under the title of "Madhouse Cells," and Agricola," which appears in the Collected Works; all of these first saw the light in the *Monthly Repository* Volume for 1836. The fourth, a charming sonnet, somewhat Heine-like in character, to be found in the *Monthly Repository* Volume for 1834, I have not seen again in any of the later editions of the Poet's works. Why I know not, for it deserves not to be lost.

Shortly before the notice of "Pauline," there appears a delightful recognition of Tennyson, whose second little volume, "Poems, chiefly Lyrical," had then just appeared, also from the pen of Mr. Fox.

On May 1st, 1837, "Strafford; an historical tragedy," was produced at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, through Mr. Macready's agency; he taking the title part, and Miss Helen Faucit the Countess of Carlisle. I am under the impression that my father introduced both the poet and the play to Mr. Macready, with whom he was on terms of intimacy. My father wrote a critique on the play, as it was acted. I find Mr. Browning sadly annoyed at the "considerable alterations" which were made for acting. He says "the complexion of the piece, is I grieve to say, perfect gallows:" and the acting of the King (which very difficult part it seems to my humble judgment would have required a second Macready to do justice to) was such, that the note leaves it with a dash, as too bad to be described.

In a letter to a relative, from an early friend who was present, I find the performance referred to amongst the London news, so dear at that date to country cousins, in the following interesting passage:

"Then, *Strafford:* were you not pleased to hear of the success of one you must I think remember a very little boy, years ago. If not, you have often heard us speak of Robert Browning, and it is a great thing to have accomplished a successful tragedy, although he seems a good deal annoyed at the go of things behind the scenes, and declares he will never write a play again as long as he lives. You have no idea of the ignorance and obstinacy of the whole set, with here and there an exception: think of his having to write out the meaning of the word *impeachment*, as some of them thought it meant *poaching*."

In 1841, the first number of those delightful "Bells and Pomegranates" appeared, the title of which was such a perpetual puzzle, both to critics and the public; recurring as it regularly did each year with a fresh number, until with the "Soul's Tragedy," the eighth and last, an explanation was appended. One of these only, appears to have been acted simultaneously with its publication, as "Strafford" was; namely: "The Blot on the 'Scutcheon," which bears date, "Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. February 11th, 1843." In this play, Macready took the part of Lord Thorold, the elder brother, on the first night of its representation only. I well remember his noble bearing, and dignified grace. It was, however, produced by him in the latter days of his management of Drury Lane, when worn out with fatigue and anxiety, he was unable to continue to sustain the part, and handed it over to Mr. Phelps for the remainder of the nights that the play ran.

It may perhaps be well for me to mention here that I have the first editions of each work before me, and copy the dates of each as I write; even to the original yellow paper covers of the "Bells and Pomegranates" (enriched with a few gracious words from Mr. Browning to my father on each).

As my memory glances back, and I try to recall my own early impressions of Mr. Browning, one bright morning rises up clear before me, like a sunlit spot through the long misty years. I see myself, a child, sitting drawing at a sunny cottage window in the then rural suburb of Bayswater. Puffs of sweet scents of hawthorn and roses came floating in at the open window as I drew. I remember that I was trying to copy Retsch's design of a young knight surrounded by Undines, who seek to entice him down with them into the waves, when Mr. Browning entered the little drawing-room, with a quick light step; and on hearing from me that my father was out, and in fact that nobody was at home except myself, he said: "It's my birthday to-day; I'll wait till they come in," and sitting down to the piano, he added: "If it wont disturb you, I'll play till they do." And as he turned to the instrument, the bells of some neighbouring church suddenly burst out with a frantic merry peal. It seemed to my childish fancy, as if in response to the remark that it was his birthday. He was then slim and dark, and very handsome; and—may I hint it—just a trifle of a dandy, addicted to lemon-coloured kid gloves and such things: quite "the glass of fashion and the mould of form." But full of ambition, eager for success, eager for fame, and what's more, determined to conquer fame and to achieve success. Soon after these first publications, he writes to a friend: "I have a headful of projects—mean to song-write, play-write forthwith." And again: "When these three plays are out, I hope to build a huge Ode—but all goeth but (with) God's will."

I think it must have been a year or two later, that I remember him as looking in often in the evenings, having just returned from his first visit to Venice. I cannot tell the date for certain. He was full of enthusiasm for that Queen of Cities. He used to illustrate his glowing descriptions of its beauties, the palaces, the sunsets, the moon-rises, by a most original kind of etching. Taking up a bit of stray note-paper, he would hold it over a lighted candle, moving the paper about gently till it was cloudily smoked over, and then utilizing the darker smears for clouds, shadows, water, or what not; would etch with a dry pen the forms of lights on cloud and palace, on bridge or gondola on the vague and dreamy surface he had produced.

My own passionate longing to see Venice dates from those delightful well-remembered evenings of my childhood.

My father had given up the editorship of the *Monthly Repository*, in 1836, to R. H. Horne, the author of "Orion," and to Leigh Hunt, with the latter of whom the journal died a natural death, two years later. My father became absorbed in political life, which occupied him incessantly from that time onwards. His name is known to the public in conjunction with those of Cobden and Bright in the great Anti-Corn Law struggle, and his pen was a weapon of power in many a goodly fight; but except in occasional lectures, the delights of purely literary work became a thing of the past. Still,

I do not remember the time, from the old *Repository* days onward, when a new poem by Browning was not an event and an excitement to him. One day, Mr. John Forster sent word that he would bring the proof-sheets of the "Christmas Eve" to read to us; and how we revelled in the humour of the opening passages; and how Mr. Forster's melodious voice did justice to the grand vision, as the poem proceeds!

In 1858–9 I paid a visit to Rome, where Mr. and Mrs. Browning were also spending the winter, on account of her health, and I saw a good deal of them; more especially, I had the great felicity of passing many quiet hours in the company of Mrs. Browning, for she kindly sat to me for her portrait in chalks; Mr. Browning the while, was giving his little son a first-rate music lesson in the adjoining room. The portrait, I may be excused for mentioning, was exhibited at the Royal Academy the same year, and was considered successful by most of those who knew her. She seemed to me to be an angel on earth, so modest, so unselfish.

At that time her poems were extremely popular, whilst Mr. Browning's were beginning only to take hold of the public. I remember his bringing in during my sittings, an American paper in which the work of the two poets were compared to the disadvantage of the husband. Mr. Browning seemed piqued, I thought, as was but natural; for the criticism showed both bad taste and want of judgment. But nothing of that sort could cast a shadow of a shade upon the perfect harmony that existed between that ideal pair. Their's was the "better love" that could "defy the scoffer."

Mr. Browning lived chiefly abroad, and took no great interest in the details of English politics, saving all political enthusiasm, either for the land of his adoption or for the affairs of past times.

But the early regard between him and my father was not dead, only slumbering. I find in my packet a long letter from Mrs. Browning to my father (under date June, 1859) about Italian matters, enclosing a cutting from an Italian newspaper, a translation into Italian of a public speech of my father's to a meeting at Oldham, which had given great satisfaction to Italian patriots.

Mrs. Browning writes to thank him "for her husband, for herself, and for Italy," for this speech on the Italian Question. She says: "One generous voice raised, and that such a thrilling voice as yours, is indeed a thing to thank God for, after all the disappointments, and, let me add, the humiliation we suffer here as to the words and acts of England."

I open also a sort of double letter, written partly by Mr. and partly by Mrs. Browning; a delightful letter from Casa Guidi, date January, 1857, on learning from Mr. Fox of his re-election as member for Oldham. Mr. Browning writes: "I wish from my heart we could get closer together again, as in those old days, and what times we would have here together in Italy"; and after a page of most delightful joking he adds: "I say this foolishly, just because

I can't trust myself to be earnest about it. I would, you know I would, always would, choose you out of the whole English world to judge and correct what I write myself. My wife shall read this, and let it stand, if I have told her so, these twelve years; and certainly I have not grown intellectually an inch over the good and kind hand you extended over my head, how many years ago!"

The letter is long, too long to quote in this place; after speaking of English books and newspapers, or rather the want of them in Italy, Mr. Browning adds: "Yet for me there would be one book better than any now to be got, here or elsewhere, and all out of a great English head and heart—those "Memoirs" you engaged to give us. Will you give us them?"

Those memoirs, alas! were never written. He that should have written, and he that would have read them, both now rest beneath the sod. My father died in 1864:—

"The poet died last month, and now
The world which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,
Commands the palms."

E. F. Bridell-Fox.

LOCH KATRINE.

I.

How calm and fair, how very fair thy face
That August evening when I saw thee first!
Thy glorious beauty like a vision burst
Full on me, and I lingered for a space,
Breathing the soft enchantment of the place,
To feel myself in fairyland, immersed
In lore and legend of an age that nursed
The finer fortunes of a fairy race.
Ben A'an and Ben Venue had held me bound
In loving reverence and in awe made sweet
By all the beauty of the nearer ground,
The Trossachs, rising lovely from my feet;
But that first gleam of thee, that sudden sight,
Filled me and overwhelmed me with delight.

II.

Wearing thy poet's praises as a crown,
Thy beauty crowns him with its own excess,
And if he gave thee glory, thou no less
Hast given him profusely of thine own;
Thy fame and his, inseparably grown,
And thine and Ellen's loveliness, express
One immortality, one loveliness,
Whereof we see the sum in thee alone.
Loch of the lovely isle and silver strand,
In whose bright waves new beauty ever breaks,
In whose deep heart, where cloud and sky expand,
Perpetual joy, perpetual music wakes,
Fairer than all thy sisters in the land,
Thou art thyself the Lady of the Lakes!

George Cotterell.

"JOHN SMITH, JUNIOR."

By E. J. Clayden.

I.

"I HOPE, Edith, if I send you to school in Paris for a couple of years, you won't come back with your head stuffed as full of nonsense as your sister's is. Let no more be said about it; if we have the party at all, I intend the Smiths to be invited. Tell Frances her fine friends may stop away if she thinks the company will be too mixed for their notions. Now, my dears, don't hinder me any longer, I ought to have been off an hour ago."

So saying, Dr. Lisle left the room; a moment later the front door banged and the brougham drove away.

"Then I suppose I had better write the card, mamma?" asked Edith, a young girl who was seated at a writing-table covered with cards and envelopes which she was filling up and addressing.

"Yes, my dear," replied a little delicate-looking middle-aged lady who sat near her. "I am sorry Francie should be vexed, but papa is quite right; the Smiths have been so exceedingly kind and polite, we really ought to show them what civility we can. I am sure the dinner they gave us the other night was splendid. Of course they won't expect us to return their hospitality in anything like the same lavish manner; they know we are not millionaires."

"Francie says she wishes Mr. Smith had not taken it into his head to fall down and break his leg at his shop instead of in his own home, where his own doctor could have attended him."

"I am sorry Frances is so foolish. It was very lucky that papa happened to be the nearest medical man who could be found, for it led to his becoming the regular doctor to their establishment; an appointment not at all to be despised. They both took a great fancy to him—papa is always a favourite wherever he goes."

"I believe Mrs. Smith thinks that but for papa her husband would never have walked again!" said Edith, laughing.

"All the more fortunate for us; they are most desirable patients."

"Of whom are you talking?" asked a tall, striking-looking girl, who had entered the room quietly and overheard the last few words.

"Of the Smiths," replied her sister; "they are to come, Francie. So now the question is, do you prefer to leave out your grand friends, Mr. and Miss Fitzhardy?"

The other flushed slightly, and drew herself up with great dignity. "I hardly see how we can do that; unfortunately I mentioned the party to Alicia just now, though what she will think of being asked to meet 'Smith and Trewson,' I am afraid to contemplate."

"Break the awful news gently—beforehand," said Edith; but her sister ignored the interruption and continued speaking to her mother.

"Alicia dropped me at our door on her way home."

"Have you had a pleasant drive?" asked Mrs. Lisle. "I suppose the Park was very full."

"And you had the delightful society of your elderly beau also, no doubt," put in Edith pertly, her bright face beaming with mischief.

Frances grew redder and still more dignified. "Edith!—how vulgar! It seems to me that during the two years I have been abroad our circle of friends has widened in a way which may be indicated by the tone of your manners. Papa will not see that people may be very desirable as patients and yet altogether the opposite as intimates. If he is really going to send you to 'Madame' he had better make haste and do so before you are hopelessly contaminated."

Edith pursed up her pretty red lips and tossed her curly head defiantly before she replied

"When I come back," she said, "I am not going to put up with any of your dull old middle-aged lovers, I can tell you, no matter how rich, or how literary, or how aristocratic!—Oh, Francie!—you ought to have the most charming lover in the world!—rich, of course—if you can get him—but young and handsome and clever, at least. Oughtn't she, mamma?—Our pretty Frances!"

The mother smiled fondly and proudly upon her two bonny girls, and patted the younger one's chestnut curls.

"What a little goose it is!—You are both much too young to be thinking about lovers; you especially, Edith, with the prospect of another two years of school-life before you. Francie must please herself, you know. Mr. Fitzhardy is an exceedingly clever and interesting man; I don't at all wonder Frances likes him. And then, remember, his sister is her dearest friend."

"Yes," said Frances, "and see how good he is to her. It is not every man who would make so much of a half-sister twenty years younger than himself. What a splendid position she has as mistress of his house. Ample means, carriages and horses, plenty of servants, and a large circle of friends among the most refined and cultivated people in London."

"Oh, I don't deny he is a charming brother," said Edith. "I was looking at him as a possible lover, a capacity in which I for my part could not tolerate him for one moment. Why, he's getting bald!"

Mrs. Lisle laughed, but Frances rose, much irritated.

"What has that got to do with it?—and who says he is any one's lover?"

"I do," replied Edith, imperturbably. "I'll bet you anything you like, he is in love with you."

Frances gave her sister a look of unfathomable disgust, but Mrs.

Lisle only smothered a smile and gave utterance to a feeble remonstrance. "Oh, Edith— my *dear!*"

"Wait and see—wait and see!" laughed that young lady. "I wish you joy of your taste, Frances. For my part, I don't care quite so much about brains if they are covered with plenty of nice thick hair—dark, I think, and curly—and the head carried straight and steady, well up in the air. Why do so many literary men stoop; is it because they are always poking their noses into ink-bottles?"

But Frances had left the room without condescending to utter another word.

"And now, Edith," said Mrs. Lisle, "having driven your sister away by your nonsense, you had better make haste and finish those invitations. You have not been quite kind to Frances, my dear."

"Oh, mamma!—I can't bear to see her throwing herself away on that old prig! Do you think she really cares for him? She can't, surely?"

"He is a good man, Edith, greatly respected; and just now, you know, Frances thinks so much of intellect and cultivation, and all that kind of thing. You must stop these jokes, they are not in good taste. Your father and I ought to be very thankful to see the chance of such a safe and comfortable future offered to one of our girls. There are so many of you, Edith!"

"Ah, yes;—eight girls! But Francie ought to be able to choose anywhere, mamma, with her face and figure!"

"She has nothing else, my dear, and young men want so much now-a-days."

Later on, when Dr. Lisle had returned from his round, dined, and established himself in an easy chair with his cigar, he said to his wife, who sat by him:

"I can't think what is the matter with Frances. She seems to me to have come back from France quite another girl. I never thought a daughter of mine could be so foolish. She takes everyone's measure, and then, if they don't come quite up to her standard, there is no getting her to be civil. This one is 'not quite a lady,' and the other 'no gentleman;' another, 'most uncultivated;' the next, 'utterly commonplace,' or 'sadly lacking in refinement,' or 'wanting in fine feeling.' I hate such sentimental rubbish! You've got to take people as you find them and make the best of them—a doctor has, any way—and it's hard then if you can't find something good in most of them. Is it all owing to the Fitzhardy influence? I can't think so, the man appears to me to be a decent fellow. I say, Milly, he called on me this morning; did you know?"

"No; Oh, William—was it about Francie?"

"Yes; he asked me for her. Of course I told him she would not have anything; he said he didn't care, and he offered to make a very handsome settlement. He is a gentleman, Milly, but I wish—why, he is double her age, or more!"

"It would be a great comfort to see Frances provided for, William; think of all the others ——"

"I don't forget them, my dear, you may be sure. I ought to be thankful, no doubt. I don't like that sister—she's a regular stuck up little fool!—Oh, by the way, look what I got just now from Smith. Isn't he a brick? I sent in his bill the other day—he has asked for it several times—and just see, he has doubled the amount, and sent me such a kind note: 'never can show his gratitude,' and so on. That's a patient worth having. Give me a man who knows how to spend his money, and I'll forgive him for making it so inordinately fast."

II.

The night of the party arrived. Dr. Lisle's house was lit up from roof to basement, carriages and cabs steadily deposited their occupants at the door, and the large double drawing-rooms were filling fast. Among the earliest arrivals were Mr. and Miss Fitzhardy. Frances contrived to whisper to her dear friend that they had been obliged to ask Mr. and Mrs. Smith, "of Smith and Trewson, you know."

"Oh, dear, how amusing," said that young lady; "I get all my frocks there! Pray don't distress yourself, Frances; you need not mention our name to them. I think it is rather fun. What are they like? Are they here now?"

"No," said Frances, delighted to see that her august visitor took the matter so affably.

"Do you know, I am quite curious to see them, Frances," Miss Fitzhardy went on, with a little laugh. "I don't think I ever met people of that sort out anywhere before." A remark which, although uttered in the most innocent manner, sent a sudden flood of crimson over Frances's fair face and neck, and she was glad enough to turn to Mr. Fitzhardy and hear what he had to say about a new collection of pictures he had been inspecting that afternoon.

Meanwhile the crowd grew thicker and thicker, and the hum of voices louder and louder. Someone was playing a florid piece on the grand piano in the larger room, but Frances, at the other end of the small drawing-room could hear little of the performance above the hubbub of conversation. Suddenly she caught her mother's eye, evidently searching for her. She made her way to her as quickly as she could.

"Frances," whispered Mrs. Lisle, "you must come and be introduced to Mrs. Smith; remember she knows no one here. I want you to come and talk to her."

A minute later the girl found herself seated by a stout elderly lady in a rich velvet dress, adorned with lovely lace, which was fastened at the throat by a magnificent diamond ornament. Above this elegant finery beamed a large, round, rosy, good-humoured face.

'I'm glad to make your acquaintance, my dear," she said. "I've

heard about you from your pa—and mighty proud he is of you, I'm sure—something like I am of my Johnny—that's my son, you know—the only one living out of ten I've had, so you can't wonder I think a lot of him."

Frances had no reply ready; none was needed, for Mrs. Smith, feeling herself upon an inexhaustible subject, continued without pausing longer than to take breath.

"I daresay you think it's funny for me to call my son 'Johnny,' and he such a fine up-grown young fellow, and taken his degree and all that—but you see Mr. Smith is 'John' and Johnny he's 'John' too. His father calls him 'Jack,' but that I never could take to, because, long ago, when I was a girl and lived in the country—before I came to London to business—I had a pet jackdaw, and I used always to call him 'Jack'—so tame he was too, he would come and perch on my shoulder! After that I never could think of giving a christian the same name; so Johnny's been 'Johnny' all his life and will be now till the end of the chapter, I expect."

She paused again to take breath and then went off on another tack. "So kind of your ma to ask us here. We think everything of Dr. Lisle, you know; there's just nobody like him. And to think that poor Mr. Smith might have been a cripple all his days through such a little thing as a bit of grease dropped on the stairs!"

Here Frances ventured to suggest that the fracture might have been equally well attended to by some other medical man; a remark Mrs. Smith negatived at once, with a very knowing shake of the head. Then she resumed the conversation by reverting to the topic which was never far from her thoughts.

"It so happened that Johnny came home to-day, him and his great friend, Mr. Josselyn. They've been travelling together on the Continent ever since they left college. We couldn't leave them at home alone the very first evening, so we took the liberty of bringing them with us. Why here they are, I declare, and your ma too."

"Frances," said Mrs. Lisle, "I want to introduce Mr. John Smith, Junior, to you, and his friend, Mr. Josselyn—my eldest daughter, Miss Lisle."

Mrs. Lisle then sank into the chair by Mrs. Smith which Frances vacated and left the girl face to face with two young men. One tall, fair and distinguished-looking, the other short, and dark, with a clean-shaven, clever face, and wearing double eye-glasses. The latter began the conversation, as his friend stood by, twirling his long fair moustache in some slight embarrassment. After exchanging a few common-places, Frances seized an opportunity to move on and speak to other visitors. As soon as she was out of hearing, the tall young man caught his friend by the arm. "By Jove, Jack, isn't she a lovely girl! We haven't seen a face like that in all our travels. What a shapely head—what rich auburn hair! Did you ever see more liquid brown eyes? and the lashes are ——

But his rhapsody was cut short by his companion turning on his heel with a muttered—"Humph! Proud as Lucifer!"

Presently Frances came close to her father, who was talking to a tall, stout, broadly-built man, with thick curly grey hair and a very red face.

"Yes, doctor," he was saying, "he's a fine young fellow and I'm very glad and proud for Jack to have such a friend. Oh, yes, he's the Wrangler—'Erbert John Moreton Josselyn. Capital name, isn't it? Now I think a good high-sounding name is a fine thing for a man. Look at me—'John Smith' might be anybody—or nobody! That's why I have the 'Trewson' in the firm. When a man hears 'Smith and Trewson,' he knows all about me—and that's what I like. But bless you, there isn't any 'Trewson' at all, really—it was my good wife's maiden name. When we began business together we were 'Smith and Trewson,' you see. Then there's my boy—he's 'John Smith' too, his mother would have it so, bless her—plain 'John Smith' had been good enough for his father, and ought to be for him. I wanted to put in the 'Trewson,' but she wouldn't hear of it. Then I thought I'd call him 'Wolvercourt,' after his godfather, our good parson—a real gentleman, and no mistake—but there again, the missis, dear soul, didn't like to, for fear the old gentleman should think it presuming on his kindness. Wish we had, now, you know. 'John Smith' isn't the name to carry a man into Parliament. But there, some day he shall buy a big estate somewhere and call himself after it, if he likes. After all it isn't the name that matters so much as the amount of 'backing up' you can give it."

"By the way, Mr. Smith," interrupted the doctor, "I should like to introduce you to Mr. Fitzhardy—Augustus Fitzhardy, you know—he is very much interested in the Society we were talking about just now; in fact, I believe he is one of the honorary secretaries."

"Oh, indeed," replied Mr. Smith. "Fitzhardy—Fitzhardy—no I don't know the name. I once knew a *Mac*-hardy, a fellow who served in our shop, and ran away with ——"

"Mr. Augustus Fitzhardy is the editor of the 'World-Wide.'"

"Indeed!—Ah, you see, I'm not much of a newspaper reader; don't go in for politics and that kind of thing; like a good novel when business is over, but ——"

"Oh," put in Dr. Lisle meekly, "it isn't a newspaper, it's a magazine—a review—the chief literary organ ——"

But Frances would hear no more; she sought out her bosom friend.

"Frances," said that young lady, "who is that delightfully handsome young man I saw you talking to just now? There was a little dark man with him whose face interested me very much."

"It must have been Mr. John Smith, Junior, and his friend Mr. Josselyn," said Frances.

"Josselyn—what Josselyn? I wonder if he belongs to the Sussex

family. One of them was fourth Wrangler last year. Herbert, I think he was called—yes, Herbert John Moreton Josselyn."

"This is he. There is mamma, Alicia, you had better ask her to introduce him to you."

Shortly afterwards Frances found the tall handsome stranger at her elbow, inquiring if he might take her down to get an ice. She was not unwilling, and when, on their way upstairs again he remarked that the rooms were suffocatingly hot and that the tiny conservatory looked a tempting contrast, she suffered herself to be led inside and seated in a shady corner on a low lounge which just held two.

The account he gave her of his and his friend's travels must have been very interesting, for when, an hour or so later, Mr. Fitzhardy hunted her up to make his adieux, she was astonished to find how the time had slipped away. He, poor man, had some reason to feel that he had been rather badly treated. He had come there that evening hoping to further assure himself that he must receive a satisfactory answer to the question he was now only waiting a favourable opportunity to put; and behold, the lady of his love was spending most of her time sitting in a quiet nook with an exceedingly dangerous-looking companion—from his point of view.

Frances felt quite sorry the evening was over. When she reached her own room, before divesting herself of her finery, she stood for a moment or two before her looking-glass. It was certainly a graceful reflection that met her eyes; a slender form clothed in soft creamy silk, a rich white neck against which lay a large cluster of sweet gloire de Dijon roses, a small head adorned with thick coils of shining hair turned simply off from a low white forehead, delicately marked eyebrows and long thick lashes shading a pair of clear brown eyes, a small sensitive mouth and straight, well-cut nose. That the picture was so far satisfactory seemed evident from the slight sigh with which she turned away and began drawing off her long gloves. Then she unfastened the roses from her bosom and held them to her face again and again, as if she could not have enough of their fragrance, afterwards putting them carefully in water, lingering over the task as if the sight and scent of them recalled something pleasant to her mind.

The next afternoon Mrs. Lisle and Frances went out to pay some calls, and on their return found two visitors' cards on the hall table and with them a basket of exquisite Gloire de Dijon roses. Mrs. Lisle took up the cards and read "Herbert J. Moreton Josselyn," and "John Smith, Junr."

Edith came flying down the stairs two at a time.

"Oh, Francie, the roses are for you. Aren't they lovely? Two gentlemen brought them, I met them on the doorstep—they came in a cab—I was just coming in from the Square with the little ones. The one who had the flowers was such a handsome fellow—he said to me, 'Are you one of the Miss Lisles?' so I said, 'Yes, I'm Edith

then he said, 'I have brought some flowers for your sister; we were talking about roses last night and she said that these were her favourite sort. I told her I was sure she had never seen any to beat those at 'The Grange' now. These are to prove the truth of my assertion.' So there—I've delivered my message and I think you ought to give me one of the roses for remembering it all."

"You are welcome to as many as you like," said Frances coldly. "I'm sure I don't want the Smiths' flowers," and she turned away and walked upstairs with a considerably heightened colour in her proud young face.

Mrs. Lisle told her husband of this little incident during their usual short after-dinner chat.

"Ah!" said he, between the puffs at his cigar, "I thought those two young people seemed rather struck with each other. Now Milly, let nothing be said to Frances. Tell Edith, I forbid any chaffing or teasing, she'd better not mention his name even. That girl is a mischievous little spoil-sport. Leave things to take a natural course. Why—it would be a match after my own heart! I don't mind confessing, I never did altogether take to the other. Did you notice how completely Fitzhardy was left out in the cold last night?"

Meanwhile, Edith was by no means above availing herself of her sister's permission.

"Second-hand presents are better than none," she said, as she pinned a choice bud or two into the front of her frock. "I wonder if I shall have baskets of roses brought me when I am grown up. I'm afraid not; I shall never be a beauty like Frances."

She might have thought differently had she overheard a remark one young man made to the other as they left the Square behind them that afternoon.

"I say, Jack—talk of that tall pale girl last night—what do you think of the younger sister?"

"She looks a jolly little thing," he replied. "It's an indescribably lovable, happy little face, and quite unconscious of its own charm; whereas, Miss Lisle knows her market value only too well ——"

"Jack! you are coarse!" his friend interrupted, hotly.

The only answer was a long-drawn expressive whistle; then there was a short pause, after which the subject was changed.

III.

During the next few weeks it seemed to Frances that she was constantly coming across the tall, handsome young man between whom and herself there had sprung up such a decided liking, almost at first sight. The intimacy grew and strengthened at every meeting. He was invariably accompanied by his great friend. Undoubtedly Mr. John Smith, Junior was to be seen in the most irreproachable society. Perhaps it was due to Josselyn's superior social standing; he

probably took young Smith everywhere as his friend, and as he certainly behaved like a gentleman, no awkward questions were asked.

Fastidious, exclusive Frances felt some surprise at this, which reached its culmination when she met them at last at the house of that even more exclusive young lady, Miss Fitzhardy. She could not resist making a remark on the subject to Alicia when the two girls were talking over the party next day, while they sipped their afternoon tea.

"Why, my dear child," she replied, "they go everywhere. The two are inseparable, and, you know, young Smith is quite wonderful, considering. Of course he has nothing to do with the business. I suppose he will be enormously rich," she added with a sigh; "his father intends him to go into Parliament, and they say he is really very clever. As for Mr. Josselyn, everybody knows who he is; and, oh, Frances, is he not—truly—delightful?"

Frances looked up quickly—surely Alicia was blushing. What did it mean? She felt a sudden sharp pang of jealousy. With this strange, new pain at her heart she could no longer bear going over and over the trivial details of last night's entertainment; so she got away from her friend as soon as she could find a decent excuse, and went home.

On her arrival she went straight up into the drawing-room, and found Mrs. Lisle and Edith alone over the remains of the tea.

"I wish you had been at home, Francie," said her mother. "Mr. John Smith, Junior, and Mr. Josselyn have just been here, and we have given them some tea. Have you had yours, or shall I put a little more hot water into the pot and give you a cup?"

Frances could scarcely intimate that she had already taken tea when Edith rushed into the conversation with, "Oh, Frances, how nice he is!—Mr. Josselyn, I mean. He talked to me all the time. I was quite afraid of him at first, because he is so dreadfully clever, but he was awfully jolly—I think he is quite the nicest young man I ever saw; and what do you think, he says if I do go to Passy he hopes he may see something of me, because he will probably be in Paris all next winter."

Poor Frances could say nothing, her mind was in a tumult, jealousy was rampant now. What did it all mean? What right had he to bring the blush to Alicia's cheek, and to come putting ideas into the head of a bit of a girl like Edith, when all the while ——? Oh! he must be a flirt—a flirt!

Then the thought of poor Mr. Fitzhardy flashed across her; perhaps he had some right to accuse her of flirting. Yet the encouragement she gave him had been very lukewarm at its best—she knew now that she had never cared for him, except as an agreeable acquaintance. But for this other?—well, when they next met she would show him how lightly she held attentions so profusely scattered around.

She had not long to wait for an opportunity. They met that

evening at a grand ball given by one of Dr. Lisle's most aristocratic patients. Frances found it rather dull. She had danced half through her programme with one uninteresting stranger after another and was beginning to vote the whole affair a bore, when a familiar voice behind her said: "What, Miss Lisle!—well I am glad. How do you do? Is Mrs. Lisle here?"

"Yes, and papa too," she replied, forgetting all her plans of revenge at the first glance from those honest grey eyes, whose every look she was learning to know so well.

"And have you any dances left? I hope I am not too late. Jack and I have been doing duty at a stupid city dinner."

"I have one or two, I think," said Frances, feeling for her programme. It could not be found; the cord and pencil were there, but the card had been torn off.

"I must have lost it," she said, "how very awkward."

"Do you remember to whom you were engaged?"

"Not a bit, they were all strangers. I know hardly anyone here."

"Nor do I. I have a happy idea:—when anyone claims you whom you think looks stupid, say you are engaged to me. Do, please, it will be a real act of kindness, as I know no one."

Frances hesitated, but he looked so smiling and friendly that she smiled too; this he must have taken for consent, for he placed her hand on his arm and walked off with her to the ball-room, where they were just beginning a waltz; saying, as he did so: "And now I only hope and pray they may be all duffers!"

A son of the house, acting as master of the ceremonies, touched him on the shoulder: "Can I introduce you to any partners?"

"Not necessary," he replied; "my programme is full."

What a change had come over the scene! Surely the lights were brighter, the flowers sweeter, the gay costumes more dazzling, the strains of the band more exhilarating! After the dance he led her to her mother, and stayed by them all the rest of the evening. She danced once or twice with the partners who claimed her promise, because she felt ashamed to refuse one after the other; but he danced with no one else. She asked him at last, why he sat out so persistently.

"Because I want to enjoy myself thoroughly to-night," he replied, and Frances felt her colour come under the glance that accompanied the words. She forgot her jealousy, forgot even her remorse about poor Mr. Fitzhardy, and remembered only that she was happy; happy as she had never been in all her short young life before.

Then, when cloaked and hooded she followed her father and mother to their carriage, he was still there to offer her his arm and whisper "Thank you for a very happy evening." The hand-clasp which followed was undoubtedly far closer and longer than formality required.

A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Lisle took her two eldest daughters

to the Royal Academy. She was feeling very tired herself, so made no attempt to go the round of the galleries, but sat for the most part on one of the centre seats while the girls looked at the pictures.

They had not gone far before they came suddenly face to face with the two inseparables, Jack Smith and Jack Josselyn, as they were commonly called; and then, as so large a party cannot very well keep together in the Academy on a crowded afternoon, very soon the friends paired off—Frances with one of the gentlemen, Mrs. Lisle and Edith with the other.

Then followed a delightful hour for Frances. There is no more completely unfettered tête-à-tête than can be obtained in a crowded ball-room or assembly; the presence of the unheeding crowd only helps to remove all feeling of constraint. And so the two young people drew closer and closer to each other. Matter-of-fact words conveyed much more than their actual meaning, through the tones in which they were uttered and the looks that accompanied them. Frances began to wonder, half with hope and half with fear, what would be the next thing he might speak of. It came as a surprise to her.

"As this is your first visit here, you have not been in the later rooms yet; come with me; there is something I should like to show you in one of them."

After some dextrous edging through the crowd, Frances found herself in front of two large portraits. "Good heavens! Mr. and Mrs. Smith!"

"Well, what do you think of them?" said her companion. They were life-like, indeed, but there was a subtle "something" which was wanting. Frances hesitated; then she gave a little laugh, and said: "I dont know whether I may venture to say what I really think?"

"Certainly," he replied, looking slightly surprised, "or I should not have invited criticism. I think they are splendid."

"Yes, they are wonderful—Mr. and Mrs. Smith to the life but——" and here she dropped her voice to a confidential whisper—"minus their vulgarity."

He made no reply, so she added quickly: "I hope you don't mind my calling them vulgar; remember you drew it upon yourself, and of course I don't know how far you consider yourself bound to them——"

"Don't you?" he interrupted. "You must know that I am bound to them by the closest tie——"

"Of friendship with their son," she put in, eagerly, half vexed that he should take her words so seriously, when she had quite expected him to join her in laughing—not ill-naturedly—at the worthy couple's eccentricities. "But what of that? Of course you learned to know and like him at college, before you can have had any idea what his parents were like. Oh, it must be mere affectation on your part not to own that the old people are odiously vulgar!"

"I know them to be unspeakably good, honest, hard-working and unselfish," was the answer.

"Oh, I daresay," she replied, with a little supercilious shrug of the shoulders, "but they haven't an 'H' between them, and I don't believe he has an idea outside 'Smith and Trewson,' or she one beyond her 'Johnny'——"

"She is one of the best of mothers!"

Frances only replied by another expressive movement, one of the affectations her sister so much despised, which she had picked up at that foreign "Ladies' Finishing School."

"I am sorry that you judge so entirely by the outer man—and woman. I confess I am surprised too. I understood that there was a very kindly feeling existing between your family and—and the Smiths."

"Oh, yes," said Frances. "I only speak for myself. I don't always share the views of my people. No, I admit, I shrink terribly from any want of refinement in my associates. And, perhaps," she went on, feeling rather nettled that he seemed to disagree with, and, indeed, disapprove of her remarks, "as we are on the subject, I may as well confess that I can't see very much to admire in the son—although he is your dearest friend. Everyone seems to find him wonderfully charming and clever and—and all that, but I don't."

"Oh," he returned at once, in a decidedly more cheerful manner, "Jack's a good fellow. He has brains too, and will make his mark, depend upon it."

"Perhaps; but his name is against him. Has it ever occurred to you to wonder what becomes of all the 'John Smiths' in the world? There must have been a great many, yet I never heard of one who did anything worth mentioning. You cannot imagine 'John Smith, Junior' a great statesman, or soldier, or author, or painter, or anything. No, no, the name is too utterly distinctive of the common-place."

He joined faintly in the merriment with which she uttered this sally, and then remarked:

"I allow the name has its drawbacks. For instance, it has struck me—more than once—lately—that a man ought to hesitate before asking a beautiful young lady if she could consent, for his sake, to become Mrs. John Smith, Junior."

The colour rushed into her face, but she laughed derisively: "Oh, dreadful!—she couldn't—I'm sure, she couldn't!"

"Yet Jack Smith can afford to give his wife nearly everything that the heart of woman can desire."

"Ah, money is a great temptation to some poor silly girls, I know.'

"But to you?"

"It counts for nothing. How can you ask me such a question, Mr. Josselyn—I thought you knew me better." Her voice softened as she ended, she glanced up at him timidly, and was shocked to see that there was hardly a vestige of colour in his face.

"Are you ill?" she asked breathlessly. "Oh, what is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing!" he replied, huskily, "the place is so hot and stuffy! Shall we return to Mrs. Lisle and your sister?"

Easier said than done; nowhere could they be found. Frances sat down in the vestibule, while her companion searched the rooms. Just as he returned with the information that they were certainly not there, his friend came rushing up the staircase and sought for re-admittance at the turnstiles.

"Oh, Miss Lisle," he began, "I have just seen your mother and sister home. Mrs. Lisle turned very faint and I was obliged to get her out. We knew you were all right. The cab is still at the door; will you allow me to take you back also?"

"That is not necessary," Frances replied. "Poor mamma! she was over-tired. Thank you very much for looking after her."

The two young men accompanied her to the entrance, where the same offer of escort was again made and declined. There had been a lurking hope in the girl's mind that the other would volunteer his company: she was disappointed; he said hardly a word, and raised his hat as the cab drove away without again meeting her eyes.

"I suppose he is offended," she said to herself. "Well, I can't help it. After all it is better he should know the truth. I do hate all those Smiths, and could never tolerate so close an intimacy, if—! Poor, dear mamma!—I hope it is nothing serious."

Her fears on this head were soon set at rest by Edith, who met her in the hall.

"Oh, here you are, Francie. I hope you weren't frightened. Mamma is all right now, it was only the heat; but Mr. Josselyn thought we had better get home at once——"

"Mr. Josselyn!" said Frances, "how stupid you are, Edith. You mean——"

"I mean Mr. Josselyn, of course," Edith returned, rather indignantly; "it is you who are stupid, Frances——" She stopped abruptly, for her sister had grasped her arm and was gazing at her with pale face and wide-staring eyes. "What on earth is the matter, Francie? are you ill? I'll call papa——"

"Stop!" cried Frances, making a great effort to regain her self-possession, "call no one—tell me again—the one who was with you, the short one—is—?"

"Is Mr. Josselyn, of course, Francie. Are you out of your mind?"

"And the other——?"

"Is John Smith, Junior—you must know that. Oh, Francie! you frighten me! What has happened?"

"Nothing—only I have made a mistake, an awful mistake——" She was almost voiceless with horror, and her heart beat nearly to suffocation; she clutched at the frightened girl again. "Tell no one, Edith, do you hear? I forbid you to mention a word to mamma—or

anyone. I will never forgive you if you do—it would *kill* me! Let me go; leave me alone—quite alone, do you hear? Oh, go, go—there's a good girl, go! Oh, what have I done—what have I done—what have I done?"

And so, with dry, tearless eyes and tottering steps she passed on into the silence of her own little chamber.

IV.

"Johnny, love," said Mrs. Smith tenderly to her son, "what is the matter with you? Aren't you well, or is it some trouble? Come to me, my lad, and tell your old mother. I can't bear to see you looking like that. Tell me, dearie; father and I will do anything we can to make it all right."

He went and knelt down beside her, putting his arms round her substantial waist, and laying his head on her kind motherly bosom, just as if he were a boy again coming to the mother for comfort and consolation.

"Yes, dear old mamsy,' he said, "I am in great trouble, but no one can help me; I must bear it alone. I will tell you, mother, because I want to go away again—I can't stay here—and you ought to know the reason. You will make it all right with my father, I know. I've fallen in love, mother, fallen in love, like a goose, and been cruelly disappointed."

"You mean the doctor's pretty daughter, don't you, Johnny? Why, father and I were so pleased, we thought ——"

"Don't speak of her, mother," he broke in hoarsely. "I can't bear it. She despises us—a proud, disdainful coquette! How can I tell you the truth? She thought I was Josselyn; it was the man of birth and family, the scholar, she cared for, not me, the draper's son. She scorned the idea of being '*Mrs. John Smith, Junior!*' If you had only heard her say the words! So I am going away. Don't distress yourself, dear old mother, I shall soon get over it. You know the old song:—

> 'If she be not fair for me
> What care I how fair she be?'

I am as much mistaken in her as she in me. Never fear that I am going to break my heart over a creature who only existed in my own imagination. And I fancied her so sweet, so pretty! I knew she was proud, and that her dainty head was full of false ideas about men and women and their true worth, but I thought she loved me and that love would open her heart and make her see more clearly what is really lovable."

"And, my dearie, my own lad, she does love you, I am sure of it. Ah!—I've seen the colour rush into her bonny face, and the light flash into her dark eyes, at the sound of your voice or your footstep.

No, no, Johnny, be patient, it will come all right. How could she mistake you for your friend?"

"I can't imagine; nothing was further from my thoughts. It came upon me like a clap of thunder."

Little more explanation was needed, and the next night saw the despised wooer on board the steamer swiftly crossing that strip of blue which separates us from other nations.

Meanwhile a dire calamity had fallen upon the Lisles, in which poor Frances's own lesser trouble became swallowed up and unnoticed. Dr. Lisle caught a severe cold, which he neglected persistently for several days until suddenly pneumonia set in, and in a few hours he lay hovering between life and death. His poor wife was in an agony of grief and anxiety, which reached the pitch of despair when, after one short week of desperate fighting for life, death won the victory, and she found herself a widow.

The grief which completely broke the delicate feeble mother down gave Frances new strength. She took the whole burden on her young shoulders, made all the necessary arrangements for the funeral, and then faced the lawyer and the anxious question, what was to come next? It was discovered that very scanty provision had been made for them all. Dr. Lisle was a man in the prime of life. He had hoped to see all his girls well-educated, married, or otherwise put out in the world, and to save enough to retire upon in a modest way. But these hopes were nipped by his early death almost in their beginning, and poor Mrs. Lisle was left with an income of about two hundred pounds a year, and eight children, only one of whom, Frances, could be said to have completed her education. Frances felt that she must manage to earn money somehow or other at once to assist her mother and sisters. But how? Few questions, alas, more difficult. After everything had in turn been duly considered, there seemed nothing she was really fitted for. She did not even know enough to continue the education of her younger sisters, she had no special talent, and if earn she must, had yet to learn how to earn. In this dilemma one solution only offered itself. Mr. Fitzhardy generously came forward with the proposal which her changed manner had prevented him from making before. Frances could not help being deeply touched by the way in which the offer was made. The mother of his wife should never pinch or starve, he said, he would undertake to double the small means already at her disposal, and besides this, Edith should have that two years abroad which her father had promised her.

It was a sore temptation. Frances had no hope that she might ever be so fortunate as to regain the affection of the man she loved: she knew she had slain all that by one vain, foolish speech. He had gone away and would not come back until he was heart-whole again. But still—she loved him! She knew now that it was indeed John Smith, Junior, the draper's son, whom she—fastidious and refined

as she prided herself upon being—loved, with her whole soul and strength. Loving him so passionately, she dare not become the wife of another man. "I should despise myself," she thought, "I should grow to hate him." And so Mr. Fitzhardy had to take his refusal, softened by many expressions of regard and heartfelt thanks. When he pressed to know the reason—if there were anyone else—she stopped him, with pale lips, confessing falteringly, "Don't ask; I have been very unhappy; I have no heart to give—I shall never marry; or, at any rate, not for a very long time." And with this he had to be content.

Then came kind Mrs. Smith. Frances was obliged to see her, Mrs. Lisle being still quite unfit to face visitors. The good woman had come on a mission of friendliness. "I should like to get to the bottom of that business about Johnny," she said to herself, as she rolled along the road to town in her luxurious carriage. "There's a hitch somewhere, I'm sure, and what I've got to do is to find out where it is. I must try and make friends with the girl. Pretty dear!—I like her little haughty 'stand off' ways; my Johnny deserves a wife who can hold her head high—he's a gentleman, bless him, and ought to marry a lady. I wonder if it's the shop that sticks in her throat?—or, perhaps, even—oh, nonsense! I can make her like us if I try, I'll be bound. I'll ask her to come and stay at 'The Grange' for a bit, just till they've had time to look about them. Poor dear Dr. Lisle!—what a mercy it was that Providence spared him until John's leg was nice and sound again." Here she wiped away a tear of gratitude.

In this mood, it was no wonder that Frances found her a most sympathetic listener to all the sad details of their loss. The girl met her in a softened state of feeling, too—compunction for the contemptuous manner in which she had spoken of the poor soul to her son; some natural tenderness towards the mother of the man she loved; as well as that stripping of conventionalities which is the common effect of the near approach of death, or any great sorrow. These made the innate craving in her for love and sympathy leap out towards that intense sympathy in poor vulgar Mrs. Smith, which brought the tears to her eyes and the quiver into her voice, and Frances recognised fully that it was possible to reap much comfort and consolation from words among which the letter "H" was chiefly conspicuous by its absence. Indeed, she hardly noticed now the deficiences which had so often made her shudder; it was heart going out to heart, the weak and sorrow-stricken appealing to the strong and sympathetic. Mrs. Smith had tact, too: she said not a word of her son and his troubles, but simply drew the girl out to speak of her own griefs, and sorrowed with her. The question of a visit to "The Grange" was negatived at once. "I cannot spare the time," said Frances. "I must find employment of some kind without delay."

Here was a grand opportunity. "Then, my dear," replied her visitor, "I think I know exactly what will suit you. I am looking

out for a nice young lady to come and live with me, and be a—a daughter, to me, in fact. You see I am very lonely; Mr. Smith is away all day at business, and—and my son nearly always off on his travels; or if not, he has a man's place to make in the world, and can't be always tied to a tiresome old woman's apron-string. Now I want someone who will be tender to my failings, and put me in the right way too when I make little slips. Mr. Smith, he's so anxious for me to be all right, and somehow I think it's easier for the men; they're always out and about, noticing things. And the loneliness is trying. Ah!—it's not easy always to be happy, even in a big house, full of fine things, if you've nobody to love in it! I never was much of a hand at fancy-work; besides, what's the good, when I can buy it ever so much better done; nor books either, they do make me that sleepy! No! what I want is just something young and pretty about me to take an interest in. Now what do you say? You see you'd be earning something which would be a real help to your mother, and I can't tell you what a pleasure and comfort it would be to me to have your dear father's daughter by me, and try and return some of his great kindness to us. Say now, my dearie, will you come?"

And what could Frances do, but throw her arms round the good woman's neck, and press her sweet young lips to the fat red cheeks which looked so incongruous beneath that smart expensive bonnet, and sob out that she would do her very, very best, to be all that she wanted, for she never could show how grateful she was to her for her great goodness and sympathy.

V.

So it came to pass that before another week was out Frances found herself living in one of the most gorgeous houses she had ever seen, having the comforting assurance that she was leaving her family with a substantial addition to their narrow means, for Mr. and Mrs. Smith had behaved with unparalleled munificence in the matter of salary. Her heart went straight out to Jack's mother, and she had not been long under the same roof with his father before she discovered that a great deal of shrewd good sense, and much kindliness of nature lay beneath the rough, somewhat bombastic outer man. Unconsciously the girl began to formulate a new creed—"True refinement may be found without much intellectual cultivation, and nobleness of nature does not always show itself in polished manners."

Before long, experience added another article of belief: it came about in this way. Going into the library one day to take a message from Mrs. Smith to her husband, she was greatly surprised to find there no less a person than Mr. Fitzhardy, the philanthropist, the man of letters, the disciple of culture. He was alone. Frances felt some awkwardness, recollecting the occasion on which they had last parted; but he was perfectly self-possessed, and began talking at once,

with easy friendliness. She explained her position at "The Grange," adding, in a tone of gentle deprecation: "They are so kind to me, it is impossible to live with them and see their goodness and not love and respect them."

"I am sure of it," he replied warmly. "Mr. Smith is renowned for his liberality, and is as unassuming as he is generous. He has only now left the room to make out a cheque for a thousand pounds, which he has promised me for the 'Society for Promoting Culture among the Lower Classes,' of which, you know, I am the secretary. We invited him to become our chairman, but he refuses on the ground that he does not pretend to any culture himself; he hopes the next generation will have better advantages in its youth. The money is to be devoted to the establishment of a scholarship, by means of which some promising lad in our night-school will have the advantage of three years' thorough technical training in any branch of artistic labour for which he shows himself best fitted."

"It is just like him. They are always giving and helping," said Frances. Mr. Smith's entrance put an end to the conversation.

It was Mr. Fitzhardy's pleasing duty to inform his sister of the step Frances had taken. Alicia could hardly believe her ears. "What!—Frances Lisle—a girl whom I believed to be patrician to her finger-tips—gone to be the companion of that vulgar, odious Mrs. Smith? It is incredible! How could one so apparently sensitive to the least want of refinement and cultivation, submit for a moment to become the dependant of people of that kind?"

"Perhaps you think she had better have let her mother and sisters starve on two hundred a-year?" was her brother's curt reply. Alicia was angry, and anger is rarely discreet.

"She need have done neither if she had only played her cards properly," she replied snappishly. "You may thank your stars she did not hook you safely before their smash-up came—you nibbled at the bait pretty considerably."

"Alicia!—you are downright vulgar," her brother exclaimed.

Later on, Mrs. Smith, thinking it would be a pleasant change for Frances, told her to invite some young friend to come and spend a few days with her at "The Grange." Greatly delighted at the prospect, Frances wrote to her dear Alicia, a long, loving, gossipy letter, such as girls love to send to their bosom friends, telling her something of her changed feeling towards these good people.

The reply came as a shock to all her previous notions:—

"Miss Fitzhardy regrets that she is obliged to inform Miss Lisle that their acquaintance must be considered at an end. She had given Miss Lisle credit for sufficient good taste to see that any intimacy between Miss Fitzhardy and the paid companion of her draper's wife was utterly out of the question. Miss Fitzhardy wishes Miss Lisle every happiness in her present station, and if at any time her name would be of service to Miss Lisle as a refer-

ence, or anything of that kind, she would be most happy to lend it."

A hot, indignant blush burned the girl's cheek as she read; her very fingers tingled for revenge! And then her better self came to her aid and she laughed aloud. "Poor Alicia!—if she had only heard her brother's proposal that day!" And so was born that fresh article of her new faith: "Intense vulgarity may be found beneath the most perfect veneer of polish and cultivation."

Mr. and Mrs. Smith quickly became very fond of Frances, and both did their utmost to spoil her; the mother, because she wanted to win the girl's love for her son's sake, and the father, because few men are unsusceptible to the charm of beauty added to gentleness and refinement. She brightened their home with her youth and sweetness, and soon let the influence of her artistic touch and good taste be felt upon their gorgeous surroundings.

Mrs. Smith spoke constantly of her charming new companion in her letters to her son, but carefully refrained from mentioning the young lady's name.

Frances was happy now; she tried to leave the future to the wisdom of Providence, and meanwhile strove with all her might to do and be all that she knew the man she loved would have wished to find her. She felt sure that a day would come when she would be able to ask his pardon for those unlucky words. How her face burned at the bare recollection of that scene! There could be no vulgarity more flagrant than she had exhibited in the pride of her own good breeding! Had he recognised this innate vulgarity in her as she had done in Alicia Fitzhardy; and if so, must not that love have been slain for ever? Here was the sharpest thorn in that soft nest in which she now found herself. Alas! she had learned too late the important lesson, that refinement and cultivation are only worthy of reverence when they are the outward tokens of innate qualities!

Mr. Smith, like his wife, was never happier than when talking about his boy, and Frances loved to draw him out on this subject whenever the occasion offered. He, knowing nothing of the reason which purposely kept his wife from bringing the young man's name up before Frances, quickly became very communicative. From him Frances learnt the history of Jack's childhood, the ailments of his babyhood, the hopes the old man had for his future, and even the name of that big sum he would place to his boy's credit when he made up his mind to marry and settle down, or when "Smith and Trewson" should be converted into a "Limited Liability Company." From Mr. Smith she also learned what the life of a successful business man must be: the energy, the enterprise, the unceasing toil, the unflagging patience that were necessary; and she could not but admire him for what he had achieved. It was "all for Jack," he said; he was a plain man himself, not likely to cut much of a figure anywhere but show him the young fellow in any society who was likely to beat

his boy. Why, everybody loved him! Even when he was a baby, hadn't Mr. Wolvercourt, their clergyman, a gentleman of first-class family, offered to stand godfather to the boy? and had never ceased to love him and take notice of him. Twice every year Jack went to visit his god-father, who was a very old man now, too old to preach any longer, quietly wearing out his last years on a small estate in the West of England.

By-and-by there suddenly came the news of this Mr. Wolvercourt's death, and Jack was recalled to England to attend the funeral. Very soon the day arrived on which he was expected to return to "The Grange."

Frances, feeling uneasy and excited at the prospect of meeting him, had ran away, girl-like, and gone to pay her mother and sisters a visit at the tiny house in which they had established themselves at Highgate. One of the children opened the door to her. On the parlour table stood a bunch of glorious roses, rich pink, crimson and damask; and roses were roses too, at this late season of the year. Edith came flying in and flung herself into her sister's arms; but when she saw Frances glance at this fragrant bowl, she turned nearly as pink as the flowers themselves.

"Well, who is the sender?" her sister inquired.

"Mr. Josselyn, of course," Edith replied stoutly. Then, as Frances opened her eyes at the sight of her guilty cheeks——"Oh, they are quite as much for mamma as for me, I assure you," she maintained.

"You!——such a mere child as you!" Frances ejaculated.

"Well, I'm not such a child but that I shall soon grow to be a woman!" said Edith smartly. Then she suddenly threw herself down by her sister and clasped her arms around her waist, tears streaming from her shining eyes:

"Oh, Francie, dear, I'm not going to school any more, I'm going to work hard at home for two years, and learn all sorts of things—cooking and dusting and sewing and everything useful—for, Francie—Wranglers aren't always rich, you know—and oh, I'm so happy I don't know what to do with myself!"

Frances hugged her tight, but could not resist a little teasing. "Why, Edith! what about the tall, handsome, rich young man, with curly hair, who was to be the only lover you would look at——"

"Frances!" said her sister, reproachfully, "I was a silly little goose then, but I know better now. After all, what do appearances matter, if the heart is good and true—and—and all your own?"

"You wise little woman!" said Frances, kissing her fondly. "Thank God you have found that out in time."

She made her way back to "The Grange" in the dusk of the evening, and stole upstairs into her own room. She would not intrude upon the family party that night, they should have their boy all to themselves; and she was glad enough to postpone the meeting she could not help dreading.

Next morning Mrs. Smith sent for her to come to the boudoir.

"I missed you last night, Francie dear," she began, "but I suppose you came home late and were glad to go to bed." She had adopted the family pet name at the girl's own request. She found "Frances" too stiff. "I had a dear friend once called 'Fanny,' I should like to call you so, if you don't mind, my dear?" she said.

It happened that "Fanny" was a pet abomination with fastidious Frances; her colour rose, but a moment after she answered gently: "Certainly, if you wish it, Mrs. Smith, but—at home—they call me 'Francie,' and I think that is prettier." Of course it was adopted at once, as nearly all Francie's ideas were.

On this particular morning Mrs. Smith wanted Frances to write a note for her which a manservant was presently to take. The girl sat down to the writing-table, and Mrs. Smith went to give orders for the man to saddle his horse.

In a minute or two Jack Smith came sauntering unsuspiciously into the room; seeing the slight figure in its plain black dress bending over her work, he said to himself, "The new companion, I suppose." Her back was towards him, he could not see her face. She raised her head. Something in the turn of the neck, the rich coils of bright brown hair, seemed familiar; he made a hasty movement—she looked round; then she rose and faced him.

"Good heavens!—Miss Lisle!—you here?"

"Yes. Oh! don't you know?" her face was scarlet. "Hasn't your mother told you?—I'm her companion!"

"Never!" All his astonishment was summed up in the one word. She drew nearer.

"Yes. My father died, and we were very poor. Then Mrs. Smith took me—she has been so good, so kind. Oh! won't you forgive me? I was ignorant, stupid, what you will—I have repented bitterly—your mother is fond of me—your father thinks so much of me—I love them both, dearly—don't tell them, I can't bear it—spare me that; let them love me still—Ah!—I think you might forgive me—now——" She bravely tried to keep back the tears that blinded her and nearly choked her utterance. He came forward and took the hands she was holding out to him with such a supplicating gesture.

"I—almost think there's nothing—to forgive," he replied, slowly, as if half dreaming. Then Mrs. Smith came in and they moved quickly apart.

"Well, Johnny, my dear, I suppose you haven't forgotten Miss Lisle? This is the dear young lady whom I have told you about, who is kind enough to come and be a daughter to me. And a very good one she is too, Johnny; I don't know what I should do without her. We understand each other, don't we, Francie?"

The girl turned and kissed her, once—twice—too much moved to utter a word—then passed swiftly out of the room. He would have followed her, but his mother caught him by the arm. "One moment,

Johnny, dear. There was some hitch between you and your love; tell me, was it us, father and me—because——"

"No, no, mother, dearest—there's nothing—God bless you!—there's nothing now——"

Frances had scarcely reached the foot of the stairs leading to her own apartment, before his voice arrested her. "Don't go, Miss Lisle—Frances—there is something I want to tell you." She paused, still half turned away from him. He went on quickly. "My godfather has left me a small estate in the West of England—on two conditions: the first is that I enter upon a Parliamentary career—and the second that I adopt his name, and henceforth call myself 'John Wolvercourt Smith'——" She covered her face with both hands.—"Under these circumstances—do you think I may venture to ask the girl I love—to be my wife?"

He tried to take the hands away from her hot, tear-stained face. "Oh!—I'm—sorry——" she faltered, yielding them to his grasp.

"Sorry, sweetheart!—for what?"

"Because—because——" Then she looked up bravely—there should be no misunderstanding now through any false shame of hers.—"Because now I can never prove to you how glad and—and proud it would make me—to be——"

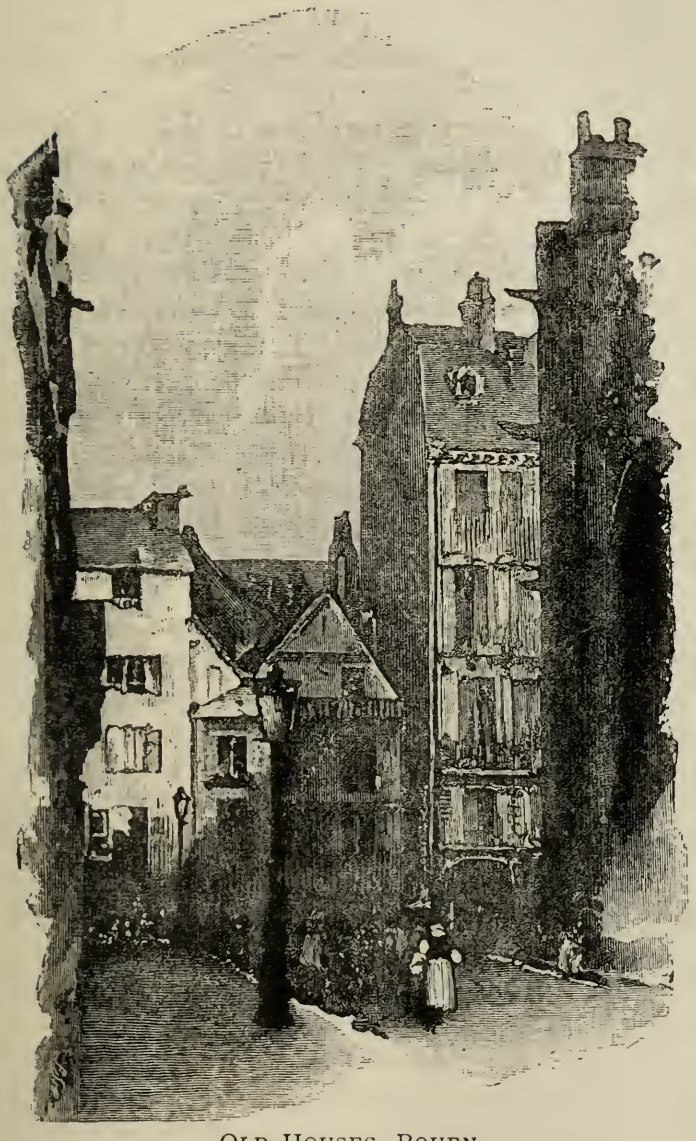
"To be what?—my love—my darling?"

It was easy now, from the shelter of his arms, to whisper:

"*Mrs. John Smith, Junior.*"

FAIR NORMANDY.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," &c. &c.



Old Houses, Rouen.

LIKE most towns of mediæval interest Rouen has yielded to the influence of the march of time, and is no longer what she has been. Much of her glory has become that of tradition. Yet sufficient remains to make her still probably the most interesting town in Fair Normandy, as she is one of the most important. In the past she has played a great part, and is associated with some of the most romantic events in history. From the days of William the Conqueror Normandy belonged to England, until in 1205 Philip Augustus stepped in and quietly annexed it to France, thereby depriving our monarchs of the titles of Dukes of Normandy. Historically, Rouen will ever be memorable as having been the scene of the imprisonment, trial and execution of Joan of Arc, the heroine of France par excellence; who has furnished themes without number for poets, novelists and historians, and who is worthy of all their eloquence. After nearly five centuries of time the name of the

Maid of Orleans still has power to thrill one with deep emotion, proving that what is great and good never dies.

We speak of Fair Normandy, but it is scarcely possible to say of her chief city Fair Rouen. Many of her best streets and quarters, from a modern point of view, would indeed be considered foul rather than fair, and we strongly suspect that the plague spot would reach further than the mere outward "dust of centuries." But from every aspect, and in spite of all conditions sanitary and other, we welcome these remnants of a bygone age. Dark vistas of quaint old houses, gabled and latticed; narrow streets, down the centre of which runs a stream of "limpid water" that rivals the far-famed water of Cologne only as serving to prove that extremes in point of odour have at last been found. But Cologne itself furnishes a sufficient example of this. Very often these old streets of Rouen are so narrow that neighbours may shake hands with each other from opposite windows, and if long-armed and long-limbed may spring lightly from casement to casement in the prosecution of free and unceremonious visits. Down some of these dark vistas one hesitates to penetrate. They are begrimed with the dust of ages. Refuse decorates their rough pavements, a fitting accompaniment to the limpid stream. The air is not incense laden. They might be dens haunted by thieves and robbers and all who live by preying upon mankind. You feel that by rashly penetrating into these precincts you are entering upon mysteries. They form an unknown land whence you may never return.

But it is not always so. Many of the quaintest streets are sufficiently wide to admit daylight, sunlight. In one of them a narrow river skirts some of the houses, washes their foundations. You have a view of a long series of arches, which compose the bridges or gangways leading to the front doors of the houses. The women congregate on the rails, laugh and talk and idle away the twilight hour. If a child falls through the rails into the water of the little river they take it very calmly. They are used to these little incidents that jeopardise life, and they have much faith in the proverb which says there is a special providence for children. They are generally hauled out again with a long pole and a net, and these curious little fish are just as lively after their immersion as before it.

In a narrow street close by, also old and gabled, a strange scene is going forward. It is a very poor street, and the people who crowd it are also poor. The shops one would very much hesitate to enter. A market is being held: the usual daily market of this poor thoroughfare. Everything is being sold; vegetables and fish, meat and fruit, tinware and hardware. The scene is very animated. The noise is deafening. What voices these lower orders have, all over the world! There is a long row of provisions all down the street. You hesitate to circulate amongst the people, for they are repulsive in dress and appearance. Every-

thing is in keeping. The houses are old and dirty and very quaint; so are the buyers and sellers. Many of them look like ancient Jews, and probably are so. The whole scene in its constant movement, animation, shouting and gesticulation is bewildering, but full of interest. It is good to watch it from a little distance; from outside the charmed circle as it were. An old Jew that might be Fagin, and an old crone that might have been Charlotte in her younger days, are bargaining over a stale fish. On both sides nose and chin meet, and the hands pointing to the object of dispute are bony and long and claw-like, like those of a miser. At length matters are adjusted, and Fagin departs with his coveted prize.

It is all quite as entertaining as a play or a pantomime; and it is full of human interest, though the humanity is of the lowest order. Even the artistic element is not wanting. Every house bears its charmed impression; what the French would call its *cachet;* both in face and outline. These have not been altered or destroyed. The ruthless march of progress has not yet come so far. But it will do so one day, and sweep away all this wealth and treasure without a moment's pause, without regret. Modern civilization has no love for the antique or the artistic. Everything must give place to the thirst for gold.

The people are not quaint in the way of costume. Very little of this is seen in any part of Rouen. It is unfortunately dying out very much all through Normandy. And as the costumes of a country always form one of its most interesting and distinguishing features: so that we can never separate the impression they make upon us from our recollection of its hills and valleys and streams, its highways and byways: this is infinitely to be regretted. It is wonderful how much costume adds to the attractiveness of a people. A face that will look pretty, almost beautiful, under a quaint Normandy head-dress, appears quite commonplace, loses all its charm, when exposed to the trying ordeal of the wonderful and fearful constructions of the latter day milliners. Let anyone come straight back to England from one of the remote Normandy or Brittany villages, where costume may still be found—such as Ploermel, for instance—and how tame and commonplace and unpoetical and unromantic (we might multiply adjectives) will the English seem in comparison. The effect is in no slight degree depressing. But the inheritors of ancient costume are not aware of their privileges; or they are indifferent to them; or else the love of change is stronger in the human heart even than vanity itself. And so here again the admirable traces of the middle ages are fast dying out.

I lately spoke of Rouen Cathedral, its beauties internal and external; but there is a second church that contests the palm of superiority with her: the Church of St. Ouen. I shall not easily forget it as we first saw it. Walking up the modern, and, therefore

uninteresting, Rue de la République, turning into the small side street of the Rue Damiette, and so on to the Place Eau de Robec—which, by the way, is close to the street of that name, where runs the small river with the quaint gangways giving access to the houses—we suddenly saw rising before us, high in the air, an exquisite, airy, fairy-like tower. It looked at the first moment more a vision or a dream than a reality; more a beautiful piece of fretwork suspended from the skies, than a building of earth. It was a perfect Gothic tower, nearly three hundred feet high, ending in an octagonal open-work lantern which has been called the Crown of Normandy; and seems worthy of its name.

As we drew near, the whole building stood disclosed, a perfect Gothic edifice, and one of the most striking in existence. It has the advantage of being better placed than the cathedral, so that a far better general view may be obtained of it. On the other hand, the lovely gabled houses and old-world surroundings that add so much to the charm and romantic effect of the cathedral are here wanting. Near the cathedral for instance, you gaze down a narrow street, rich in quaint gables and outlines, dormer windows, and latticed panes; and the extremity of the street is closed in by an exquisite south doorway, rich in sculptured and crumbling decoration, above which the towers rise majestically on either side. It is a matchless effect and view. The pure and clear blue sky above is scarcely needed to make it almost celestial.

Nothing of this sort is found in the neighbourhood of St. Ouen; but the building itself is quite independent of all accessories. The whole exterior is distinguished by lightness and grace; an effect much increased by the open arches and tracery of the octagon, and the small flying buttresses that reach to the turrets in the angles. The crown terminating the octagon consists of fleurs-de-lys: a symbol also carried out in the tracery of the windows and in the painted glass.

The interior is as beautiful, as light and graceful as the exterior. It is of immense size: four hundred and forty-three feet long, eighty-three feet wide, and one hundred and four feet high. The view looking downwards from the west doorway is almost sublime in its uninterrupted perfection, and no superfluous ecclesiastical ornamentation in the shape of screens or gates or divisions disturbs the view. It is full of calmness and repose. The choir has double aisles, and the nave has no side chapels. The front pillars run up to the roof; the side pillars bend under the arches. The clerestory is unusually large and lofty, adding to the effect of lightness, which again is increased by the number and size of the windows. Standing in certain positions, the solid portions of the walls are lost, and the cathedral appears to be composed of nothing but window and tracery. The four central pillars supporting the tower are of extreme beauty. Most of the windows are filled-in with coloured glass, including the beautiful rose windows in the north, south

ST. OUEN.

and west transepts. The prevalence of coloured glass adds much to the beauty and effect of the interior. The windows are so large and so numerous—one hundred and thirty-five in number—that the light, though subdued, is full and rich.

The font near the west doorway is filled with water, and reflects the whole of the building in a singular and striking manner. The verger called it a "discovery" on the part of the monks of old, and considered it a sufficient atonement for all the sins they committed—if monks can be guilty of committing sins.

For, once upon a time there stood a convent here, where now stands the Hôtel de Ville, on the north side of the church. Four churches in succession have been built upon the present site of St. Ouen, destroyed in turn by the Normans or by fire. The present public garden was originally part of the monastery garden, and what is now the sacristy, or robing-room of the church, was once part of the cloisters. The verger will take you into the robing-room with the greatest pleasure, and show you the photographs he has for sale. He is a highly respectable man, perfectly dressed, and speaks admirably. You wonder if he is a gentleman come down in the world, or whether, on the other hand, he was born one of "nature's gentlemen." However it may be, he dignifies his office. You have every confidence in him, and when he tells you that his photographs are better than anyone else's you believe him. You discover afterwards that many of the photographs in the town are considerably cheaper than those you bought from the sacristan; but afraid of having your impression disturbed of this ecclesiastical admirable Crichton, you do not examine them too closely to find out whether they are also inferior.

Outside the cathedral, in the north-east corner, is the only trace left of one of the former churches: a beautiful Norman apse, almost the gem of the whole building. Beyond it comes the Hôtel de Ville, which was the former Benedictine Monastery of St. Ouen—the Saint having been Archbishop of Rouen in the seventh century. It contains a large public library and many richly-painted and illuminated manuscripts of great interest.

The weak portion of the Church of St. Ouen is the west front. In this it contrasts unfavourably with the cathedral; for the west front of the cathedral is perhaps its strongest point. On the other hand, the south portal of St. Ouen is scarcely to be surpassed. It is surrounded by a fringe of open trefoil arches of rare and exquisite workmanship; and two grained pendants, six feet long, are suspended from its deep vault. The reliefs over the door represent Death and the Assumption of the Virgin. Above rises the magnificent rose window, companion to the north rose window, which has so sad and romantic an interest; and yet above that is an arcade decorated with eleven statues. The whole is crowned by a statue of St. Ouen.

CATHEDRAL.

The master-mason of the Church of St. Ouen was Alexander Berneval, who murdered his apprentice through jealousy, because the pupil had surpassed the master in the execution of the rose window in the north transept, with its wonderful tracery. The builder suffered for his sin; but the monks, out of gratitude, buried his body within the church, which henceforth became a glorious monument to his

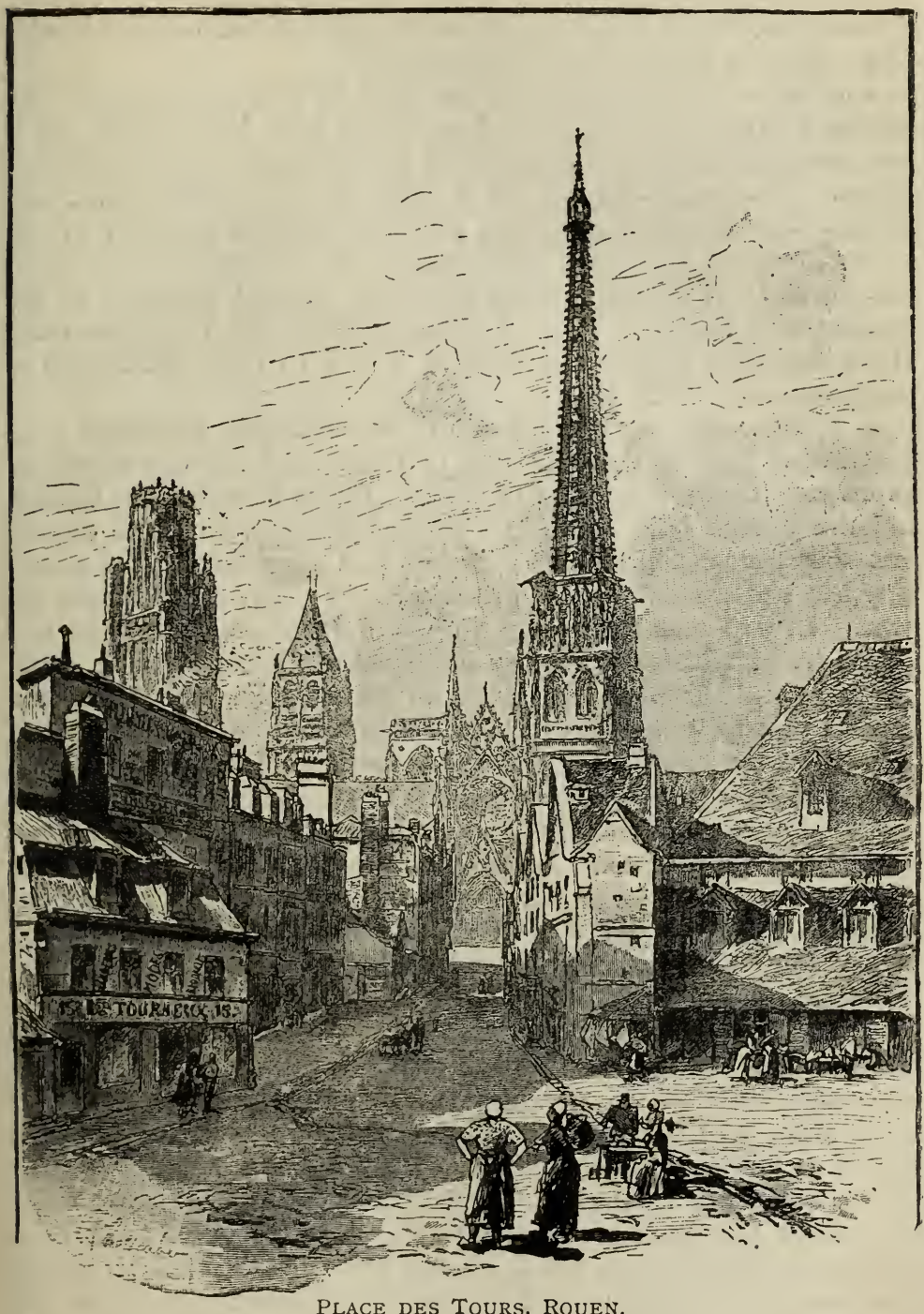
memory. A fresco or drawing on the north wall records the tragic event.

The church was commenced in the year 1318, and finished towards the end of the fifteenth century; but a great part of the west front was reconstructed about the year 1846, and is therefore modern. Whether in the centuries yet to come it will have crumbled into beauty and decay it remains for those centuries to disclose. We of the present generation shall have long passed away with the Benedictine monks of St. Ouen and all other orders to the Land of Shadows that lies beyond the veil. For the present the west portal of St. Ouen offends the lover of beauty and antiquity. One cannot find fault with it architecturally, but it is destitute of all poetry and romance. It has the clear, hard outlines of newness. It might have been completed yesterday. It does violence to the rest of the building, and coming straight from the wonderful and dream-like west front of the cathedral, it becomes almost aggressive. Such, at least, was its impression upon us who gazed and could not help the comparison. H.C., who before the west front of the cathedral had gone into a profound series of raptures and contortions, here, figuratively, felt his spirit fainting within him, gnashed his teeth, and went into weeping and wailing.

But passing beyond the portals into the interior, what a vision was at once disclosed. What a grand expanse, what broad and lofty proportions, what beauty and light and elegance. You were at once raised to another world, a higher influence. The whole interior stood unfolded at a glance, in all the perfection of the Gothic school, marvellously pure and refined, full of charm and grace. The eye wandered upwards in a series of arches upon arches, tracery on tracery, the front pillars of the richly moulded piers running up to the very roof. The rich glass of the windows threw its gorgeous light around, dyeing the pavement with its many colours.

We gained something in effect when we first saw it, inasmuch as that service was not going on, and the vast interior was empty, excepting for the presence of two quiet English ladies, apparently lost in contemplation of the scene. They sat where the sunbeams, penetrating through the windows, fell athwart them in brilliant rays, so that they looked like silent images brought into relief by rainbow colours. But they presently rose and joined us in our inspection, and we soon found that they were decidedly "children of earth," and not inhabitants of purer and more ethereal regions. H. C., as usual, became immediately polite and attentive; assuming that delicately tender and deferential manner which ladies so well appreciate; explaining everything in his admirable way, and making clear and simple what to these ladies were mysteries of Architecture and motives of Period. They were very much taken with him; it was pronounced and unmistakable; and when they separated, presented him with their card and begged for his further acquaint-

ance. A gratified flush mounted to his brow, poor simple moth that he was. It is certain that if he goes on cultivating and indulging his



PLACE DES TOURS, ROUEN.

present flirting propensities, he will one day land himself in serious trouble, the defendant, probably, in some heavy Breach of Promise case: or, perhaps, an action for Bigamy.

"What a charming young man," I overheard one lady whisper to

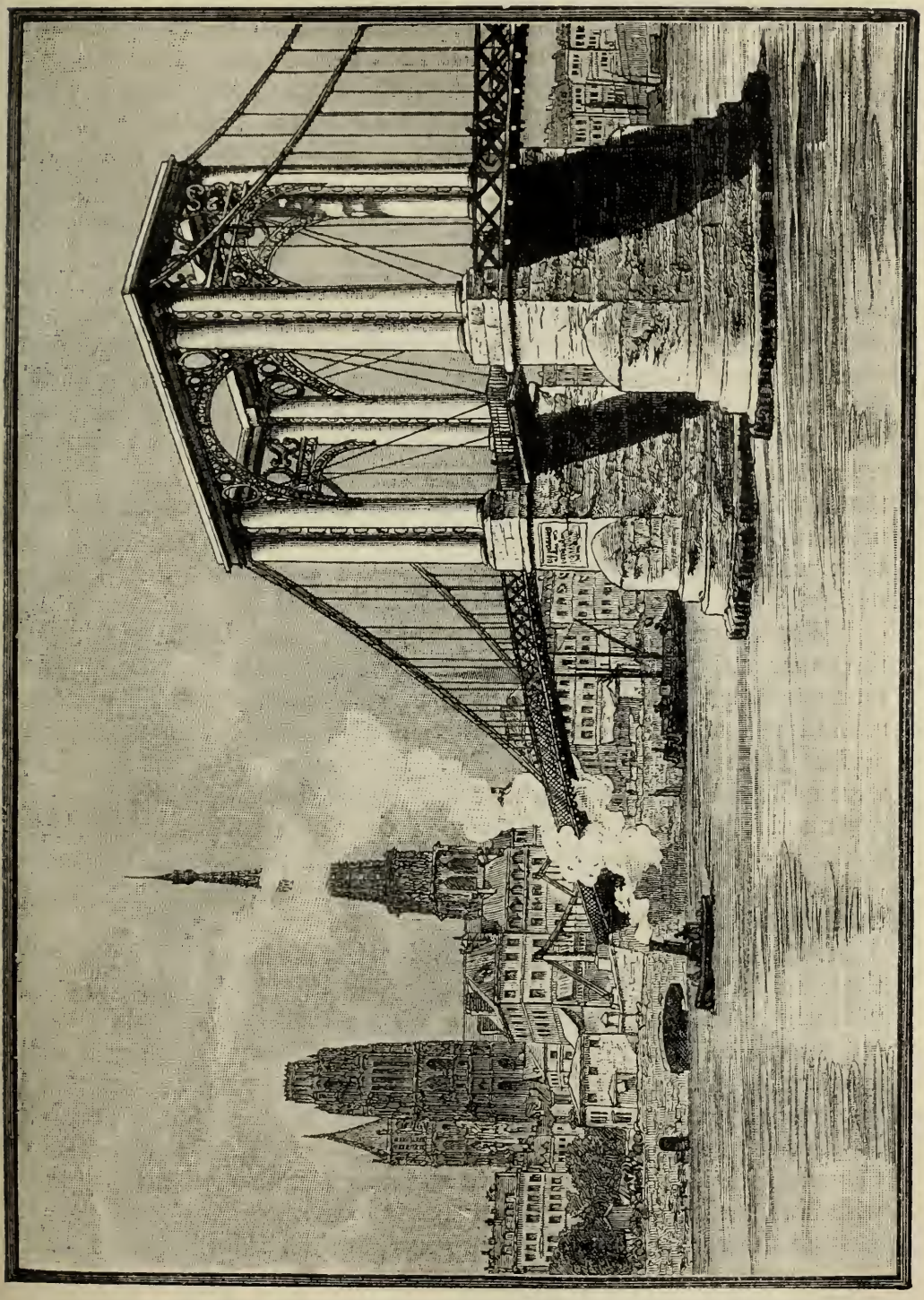
the other as they passed again within the tinted sunbeams. I was just the other side the pulpit and they did not see me. "And what a heavenly smile and cultivated mind," responded the other to the one. "How delightful it would be to make a tour of the cathedrals with him. Do you think we might propose it?"

I waited to hear no more, but conveyed H. C. out of danger. He was as sulky as the oft-quoted bear, for at least half-an-hour, but it was quite impossible for his amiable temperament to remain so any longer. We went and sat for a while in the public garden, and contemplated the bronze statues, and the beautiful east end of the church, with the wonderful and exquisite Norman apse in the north east corner. We stood on the site of an ancient cemetery of the monks; and where in 1871 a Roman Necropolis was discovered. Here, too, Joan of Arc was publicly forced to make declaration of imaginary sins and errors.

It is impossible for Rouen not to be intimately associated with thoughts of Joan of Arc. It was in Rouen that she was examined, imprisoned, tortured, and put to death. It was here that the English and the French both eternally disgraced themselves. It is in vain that they have canonised her; in vain that they have named streets after her, and erected statues to her memory; they cannot undo the deed. In vain that the wicked Bishop of Beauvais, her accuser and unjust judge, afterwards publicly confessed his wickedness; it could not bring her back to life. It is to the everlasting shame of the English that they put her to death, but to the yet greater shame and disgrace of the French that her own countrymen betrayed her. The Bishop of Beauvais was French, and the false priest, who was introduced into her cell under the guise of friendship, in order to learn her secrets, was French also. There seem to be no depths of wickedness of which human nature cannot at times be guilty; and as in the days of old men were possessed of devils, so possessed they must still be occasionally. The simplicity, the bravery, the purity, the high and successful mission of the Maid of Orleans, only seemed to harden the heart of her accusers. After a public trial—if that could be called a trial which tended all one way, and of which the conclusion was foregone—she was burnt as a witch in the year 1431, in the square which bears her name, and on the spot now marked by a monument erected in the worst possible taste.

She was taken prisoner at Compiègne, but her own people made no attempt to rescue her, and Charles VII. seems to have been perfectly indifferent as to her fate. She had re-established his throne and saved his kingdom, but it was all forgotten, and Joan was abandoned to her fate. Four centuries have rolled away, but the memory and fame of Joan of Arc are as vivid as ever, whilst ten times four centuries will not blot out the shame of her enemies. After she was burnt, her ashes were collected by the public executioner and thrown into the Seine by order of the Cardinal of Winchester,

one of the most vindictive of her pursuers. He and others witnessed her execution, and even gloried in her sufferings, interrupting the



SUSPENSION BRIDGE OVER THE SEINE.

confessor who was supporting her by his presence, and bidding him conclude his office.

She was imprisoned in the *Château fort*, a castle built by Philip

Augustus in 1205, and destroyed by Henry IV. This castle was flanked by seven strong towers, of which only one remains. This one tower had fallen into the possession of les Dames Ursulines, a convent of nuns in Rouen; who were about to demolish it when the town stepped in, bought it and rescued it from destruction. In this tower, or one of the others, Joan of Arc, the maiden of Domrémy, was imprisoned; and on the walls of this tower is a record of her famous reply to her accusers when before the tribunal, to the effect that though they drew untrue words from her, under torture, and though they severed her soul from her body, yet truth and fact would ever remain.

This tower is one of the remaining monuments of Rouen. It is surrounded by ancient and picturesque houses, with dormer windows and gabled roofs, an assembly we could not resist photographing from different points of view. Suddenly from one of the windows there appeared a woman's head, and a shrill voice politely requested the honour of receiving one of the photographs. In reply to this we requested the honour of the lady's name and address, assuring her that a photograph should follow in due time. Whereupon a paper presently came fluttering to earth bearing the information; and the lady, with many smiles and blushes—all addressed to H. C.—modestly withdrew, and the casement was closed.

"What agreeable, unsophisticated people," said H. C., picking up the paper and putting it away safely. "I like these genuine, unceremonious ways, with no arrières pensées about them. They rather remind me of the best type of the Irish—those who were dead against Home Rule and Separation. For I soon found out that these were quite the best set, and that the Home Rule people were a disorganised body, who had nothing of their own to lose and rejoiced in the very idea of anarchy and confusion as a possible gain to themselves. It was, in fact, a sort of reversal of the proverb which tells us that 'When thieves fall out honest men get their own.'"

H. C. had indeed changed in all his thoughts and sentiments upon these subjects. It was only another illustration of the saying that "Truth prevails in the end." He now looked back with horror on his radical days. "I cannot," he would sometimes say after a long and profound train of thought: "I cannot now believe that I was ever as great a radical as you would try to make out, or even as I believed myself. But be that as it may, I now see that any form of Government which would remove all ancient landmarks, and upset all wise laws, and change everything that is for something else that is not, must in the end bring a country to ruin, and its inhabitants to hopeless confusion."

This was very delightful, and I suggested that H. C. should give up all his artistic proclivities, all his indulgence in the dolce-far-niente state of existence that is at once his pleasure and somewhat of his snare, and turn his thoughts to politics and a seat in Parliament. He

would certainly become far less interesting, yet a more useful member of society. Whether it will ever come to pass remains to be proved. At present he elects for a somewhat lazy life, and his indulgence in the love of the beautiful.

There was certainly a great deal in Rouen to appeal to one's artistic feeling, and to one's love of the beautiful and the antique. Our days

TOUR ST. LAURENT.

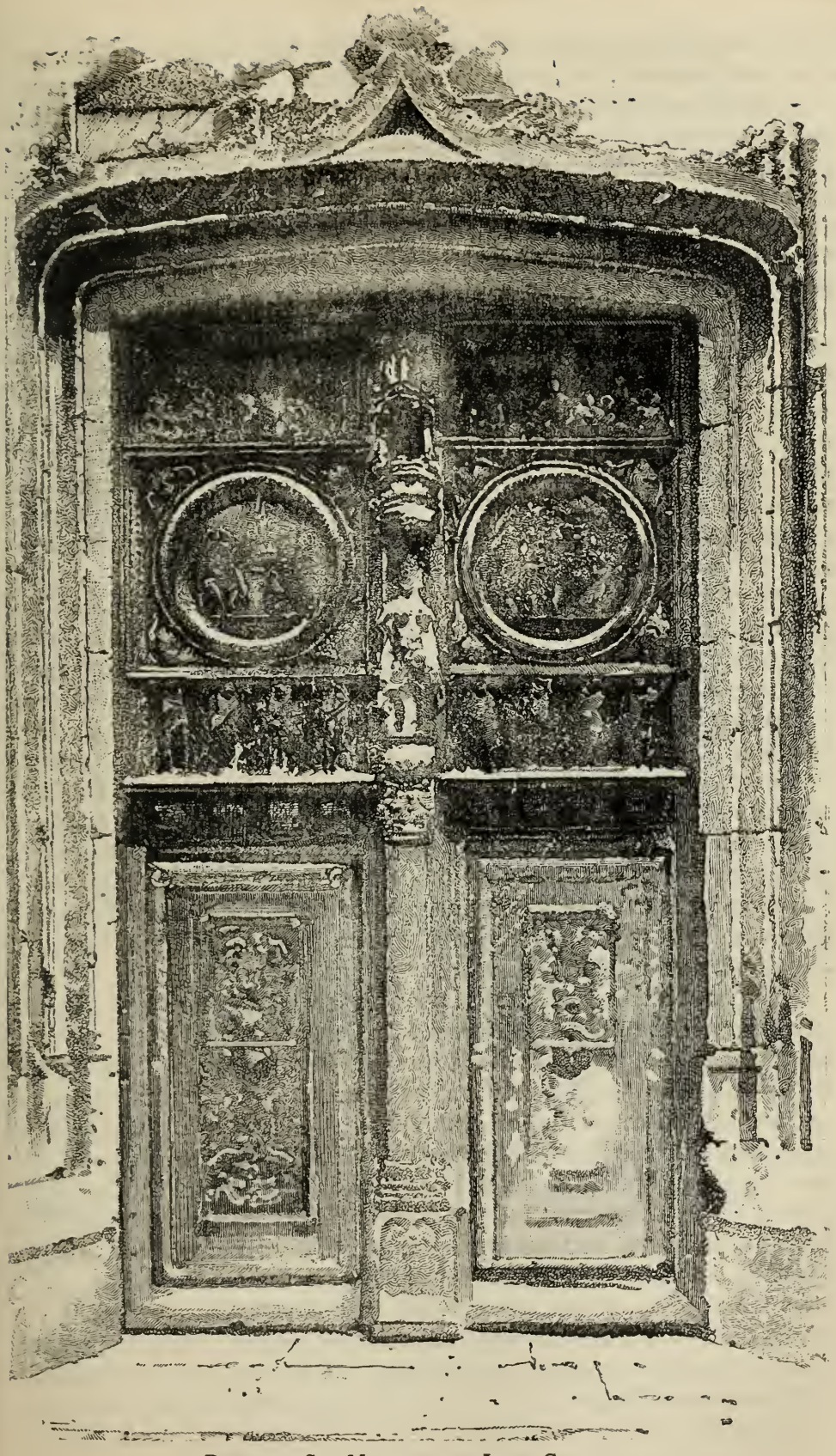
passed in a dream. We haunted the old quarters, the ancient and dilapidated streets. The gabled houses in spite of the dust of centuries, and the dirt and dust of the hour, delighted us. The dormer windows and the latticed panes were ever lovely in their old age and decay. We plunged boldly into mysterious regions, dark and dim with a light that was certainly not religious. Sometimes the stray inhabitants would gaze at us as if we were strange and unknown birds of passage; at other times we were received with that indifferent contempt which is said to be the worst of all treatment.

We were abundantly rewarded. Days and weeks would not exhaust the hidden beauties of Rouen, for you may visit and revisit these old haunts, and each time find some new feature to charm the eye, and reward the most indefatigable patience and research. True it is always of the same kind; the beauties of architecture and antiquity; but it is a kind that is only too rare; only too quickly disappearing from the face of the earth. In the centuries and generations that are to come there will be nothing handed down to posterity so beautiful as we have possessed in the traces and remnants of the middle ages; those grand old mediæval times whose people seemed full of genius and lofty thoughts and ideals: times which furnished so much that was great in art; when men had convictions beyond the reach of all power of argument; religious faith and fervour which the terrors of martyrdom could never destroy.

In our walks in Rouen we came upon many of these ancient streets, in what would probably be called the back slums of the city, parts that the sanitary inspector would no doubt condemn as liable to infection and disease. But we had nothing to do with interiors, though no doubt many an interior would have charmed and delighted us, if we had known where to choose and received permission to enter. It always seems to us that life from behind those latticed windows must be so different, the people so much more interesting and original, than anything that can happen or exist under modern influences. And the outer world must be seen under a new aspect; or perhaps under an old aspect; but at least and at any rate, in a much more charming atmosphere.

Again we would come upon a long stretch of river or canal; a narrow stream bordered by crumbling walls and small back gardens, which furnished weeping and over-hanging willows, and other small trees that found their reflections in the running water. And above, from out the greenery as it were, would rise the quaint gables and the red roofs, the dormer windows and latticed panes of these ancient houses. It was impossible for the eye not to be charmed. If the sun shone and the sky was blue, it was quite a laughing scene, full of beauty and sparkle. The sunshine seemed to gild the old houses into life and youth once more, and the phantoms of the past, by which all these old houses are haunted, seemed to vanish and disappear as mists before the dawn.

There was one such spot in particular in Rouen to which we returned many times, though it was far from our hotel, for the sake of the vivid delight and impression its contemplation invariably gave us. It was all I have described. In sunshine it was full of sparkle and beauty, and in gloom it was full of depth and grandeur, and a certain artistic colouring that invariably sent H. C. into the poetical mood I had once fondly hoped was buried with the Majorcan days. But I suppose we cannot really discard our nature. Our moods may slumber, but they do not die. They may remain in abeyance for a



Door of St. Maclou, by Jean Goujon.

time, but they are there, ready to spring into activity the moment they are aroused. It is so with ourselves; with our inner nature, our virtues and our faults. We conquer and subdue the latter, but they are never completely eradicated. We bind chains about our souls, and if the chains themselves disappear, they leave an impression that is much more lasting.

But there was a great deal in Rouen—to resume our legitimate theme—that was wonderfully interesting, without going to the outskirts of the town, or into its ancient quarters.

Right in the very centre of the new part of the town, for instance, and almost under the shadow of the cathedral on one side, and St. Ouen on the other, is the Church of St. Maclou, a very rich example of the florid gothic style of the fifteenth century. The west front, with its deep tripal porch, is very magnificent and elaborate, and its doors, exquisite examples of Jean Goujon, are almost unrivalled. The interior is not very striking, but it has some beautiful stained glass windows, and a remarkable and very lovely gothic staircase leading to the organ loft.

Not very far off is another building equally interesting, but not ecclesiastical; one of the most noted in France. This is the Palais de Justice, erected in the days of Louis XII. It is a magnificent building in the florid gothic style, and is loaded with ornamentation. It forms three sides of a square. The wing on the left is called the Salle des pas perdus, from its great size. It was built in 1493 as an exchange. The roof resembles a ship's hull, inverted, and is of a dark rich colour that is very effective. The central portion was built about the year 1500 for the Supreme Tribunal or Parliament of Normandy. The building is now chiefly used as an Assize court. The exterior is extremely effective, and of the most refined character. It resembles very much some of the town halls of Belgium, but is of still greater beauty and refinement than any of these.

Another building of the same character, smaller but equally interesting, is the Hôtel de Bourghéroulde, constructed at the close of the fifteenth century by the Seigneur de Bourghéroulde for a palace. It is situated in the Place de la Pucelle, and the great gates admitting you are behind the statue of Joan of Arc. There is a porter, whose offices are scarcely wanted, for there is little to be seen beyond the exterior of the building. It is built round a court, and the enclosure is one of the most beautiful and perfect things in Rouen. You pass through the gates, and are immediately in another world and another age. A beautiful hexagonal tower rises in the centre, richly sculptured; on your right is a short but exquisite staircase, leading to rooms that to-day are given up to financial matters. On the left the walls are richly decorated with reliefs, representing scenes from the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." The upper windows are pinnacled. The whole is in that condition of crumbling decay which adds so much to its beauty.

Near the Tour St. André is the ancient house of Diana of Poitiers. The front is nothing but sculptured wood of amazing richness. Not far off this is the clock-tower, one of the most curious monuments of Rouen. It was built in the year 1389, and contains two bells cast in the thirteenth century. One of them, named the Silver Bell, still rings the curfew every night at nine o'clock. The gateway, which unites the tower to the former Hôtel de Ville, was constructed

ROUEN.

in the year 1511. It is of great beauty and interest; and looking down the street beyond it affords one of the most quaint and charming pictures to be found in this ancient city. In the basement of the tower is a fountain, bearing figures of Alphæus and Arethusa, whilst the walls of the gateway are decorated with reliefs representing scenes from the life of the Good Shepherd.

But it would be difficult to enumerate all the points of interest belonging to Rouen. There are many Gothic fountains spread about the city, of great beauty of design. The quays themselves are broad and full of interest, and the port is always crowded with shipping: with vessels of three hundred tons and downwards. The excursions

in the neighbourhood are full of charm. The views from the heights are wonderful. Rouen lies sleeping in a hollow, her tall factory chimneys rising like a small forest about her. A blue atmosphere hangs over her. The broad Seine winds her silvery course, and may be traced far away, hurrying to the sea. There is life and movement on her surface, for craft of all sorts and sizes are passing to and fro. You may take the steamer to Havre every day, or to Elbeuf, and you will be charmed with the journey. The banks of the Seine offer a rich variety of scenery. It is, indeed a laughing and smiling landscape: more charming and English in its aspect than will be found in any other part of France. Throughout Normandy will be found the beautiful flower-gemmed hedgerows which are so peculiar to England, and give to English scenery its rich distinctive character.

It was with the greatest reluctance that we prepared to leave the old town, with all its ancient and historical associations. Here one lived another life, breathed another atmosphere. It was sufficient charm to wander to the cathedral, and feast one's eyes upon all that beauty of architecture, time-worn and refined to the delicacy of lace work. It was a delight to pass through the portals of St. Ouen, and gaze upon all that free expanse of perfect Gothic architecture. One felt raised and elevated above the ordinary world. It had the effect upon one of some sweet-toned instrument; of grand harmonies poured forth in an uninterrupted stream. The spirit felt soothed and refreshed; one's physical condition gained by the experience; the nerves that perhaps were recently all ajar were immediately calmed as if lulled by a narcotic. The mind fell into repose. Visions and dreams of a higher life and a better world took possession of the fancy. The mantle of care and sorrow—that unseen but very real garment that we most of us have to wear, though it may be invisible to mortal eyes other than our own—falls from the shoulders on these occasions, and we rise free and unshackled above our ordinary selves.

We felt equally out of the world when wandering about the ancient streets that still remain to tell of what has been. Half a century ago, Rouen was quite a mediæval city: a city of gables, of dormer windows and latticed panes and red roofs. Her pinnacles rose upwards in countless numbers. Her churches seemed fitting guardians of so much antiquity. The silver curfew rang out nightly over one of the fairest and quaintest scenes of earth. Her people went to and fro in their curious costumes, fulfilling their simple annals. The power of steam had not as yet been heard or seen, hurrying men to and fro upon the earth. Paris was still far off, and the outer world was a dream. The river flowed onwards to the sea, and people occupied themselves little with its rise and fall. Lives were primitive, even half a century ago. It is since then that the world has awakened and things have changed. It cannot all be for the better, even in an age of progress. For progress also means transition; and in every state of transition someone must suffer.

And Rouen has suffered. Her people can scarcely be as noble and disinterested as they were in quieter and more sleepy days. But they are a fine race, and probably will hold their own in comparison with other people. And if Rouen itself has suffered, and lost most of her mediæval aspect, perhaps it makes us prize and appreciate the more what remains. We look down a vista of gables and red roofs, and dormer windows and latticed panes; we note all the beauty of outline and colouring; we see how charmingly the blue sky overhead blends with the wonderful old-world view below: we close our eyes and thoughts to the rest of the world; and we are thankful. And in her darkest and lowest quarters, where daylight scarcely penetrates, and where cleanliness is scarcely known, after all we feel inclined to exclaim with all our energy of heart and soul, FAIR ROUEN! Long may she flourish!

ON FINDING AN OLD LETTER.

OH, little scented billet doux,
What strange emotions have you brought,
What tender trains of pensive thought—
'Tis ten years since you met my view!

I seized it with a trembling hand,
And tore the silken bonds apart;
I pressed it to my lips—my heart—
With feelings few could understand.

From out its folds there fell some flowers,
They fell in fragments at my touch—
In ruin sweet! they said so much;
They spoke to me of bygone hours.

And where is she from whom they came?
Moves she on earth, or dwells above?
I loved her with a spirit's love,
It was no simple boyish flame.

Not here—not here—but far away;
From one of those bright stars we see
She now looks down and beckons me,
Beyond the clouds, beyond the day.

I kissed the lines—'twas with a sigh—
Then, mute into the dim dead past,
A long, long mournful look I cast,
With aching heart and spellbound eye.

ISABEL CLIFFORD, M.D.

I.

IN one of the loveliest valleys of the Bernese Oberland—the lovely valley of Rosenwald—is a nook where nestles a small hotel or large pension, much frequented by artists of every nationality. It was looking its loveliest one night when an August moon filled it with a light far more beautiful than the day. So thought one of the visitors who sat, wrapped in her dressing-gown, studying the weird effects of deep shadow on the still, pine-clad slopes before her window. She had sat there for nearly an hour, drinking in with quiet delight the beauty of the scene, when a hurried knock at her door startled her.

"Is it you, Auntie? Is anything the matter?" she said, in a low tone, as she slipped back the bolt and opened the door.

"Isabel, that baby in the room next mine has got croup. I'm sure of it. *Won't* you go and see it?" The old lady's tone was one of pleading, and she looked doubtfully at her niece as she spoke.

"Won't you go, Auntie? I'd so much rather not ——"

"Oh, I'm too nervous. Of course they have no doctor, and I don't believe that poor young mother knows what to do."

"Do you think so? Perhaps ——"

"Don't delay, dear. They will be glad enough to have your advice when they know."

Miss Clifford obeyed without further hesitation. She went to the room whence issued the distressing sounds which every mother knows and dreads. Her knock was not heard; so she entered and went to the bedside before the child's mother was aware of her presence.

"Will you let me look at your child?" said Isabel, gently. "I am a doctor."

"I don't know what ails her; she is very ill," was all the mother answered; but she stood aside and held the candle so that Isabel might see the little patient.

"You must ring for some boiling water," commanded the doctor, after a quick glance round the room. Mrs. Lawrence obeyed with an encouraging sense of trust in the stranger, who had so unexpectedly appeared in her utmost need. She knew very little about children, for this was her first; and she had never in her life before felt so helpless as when she knelt by her darling's side, afraid to leave her even to ask advice and aid. In a very few minutes, Miss Clifford dipped a sponge into hot water, and, opening the little nightgown, she laid it on the child's throat. Some moments went by in silence; presently the harsh, ringing sound grew less distressing, and the pulse in the tiny wrist became slower. The two women did not speak

another word, as again and again the scalding sponge was placed on the delicate skin. At last the doctor stood back from the bed. Mrs. Lawrence looked mutely the question she dare not put into words, and received the reply she had hardly hoped for.

"Yes, she will do now. Keep her warm and watch closely while I go and prepare some medicine. I think I have with me what I want."

Left alone, and almost overwhelmed by her relief, Mrs. Lawrence gave herself the indulgence of a few tears; but she bravely dashed them away and sat down to watch her child, who was quietly sleeping. She remembered, and now with a feeling of surprise, that the girl who had come to her in her despair, and had done so much for her, had sat beside her for nearly a week at the table d'hôte, yet she had never discovered the profession of her neighbour. Miss Clifford generally spoke only to her aunt, or to an old French artist who sat opposite, and with whom she seemed to have quickly become friends. Mrs. Lawrence thought again of the slight figure in its trailing white robe, of the small head with its coils of golden-brown hair, and of the delicate white hands that had ministered so deftly to her Nellie. Yet, unlike as Miss Clifford seemed to her preconceived notion of a woman-doctor, Mrs. Lawrence never felt a moment's distrust of her skill. There was too much unconscious dignity and composure about her for that.

"She is sleeping," whispered Mrs. Lawrence, as the doctor again entered the room, bearing a small bottle and a glass.

"You must give her this now. Afterwards she may sleep as long as she likes." And as the child swallowed the medicine and sank to sleep again, Isabel added: "My room is next but one on the left; you must call me if she does not continue to sleep quietly. But I think she will be all right after a few hours."

It was now one o'clock, and Isabel returned to her room and lay down. The moonlight was fading away as she fell asleep. By five she had risen and dressed, and, as some noisy tourists left the hotel, she knocked once again at Mrs. Lawrence's door. Nellie lay fast asleep, holding her mother's hand. Mrs. Lawrence looked up with a smile.

"She has not waked once. How can I thank you?"

"Lie down on the bed and go to sleep. I will stay with you."

"Please do stay, though I can't sleep. My husband will be here in a few days, and he will thank you properly. We ——"

Miss Clifford interrupted her. "I have a very strong objection to telling people that I am a doctor when I am abroad, unless it is necessary. You will do me a great kindness if you will forget it, or at least not tell anyone here."

"May I not tell even my husband? I want him to know what you have done for Nellie. But no one else shall know, if that is your wish."

"It *is* my wish," said Isabel decidedly. Then, as if amused at her own earnestness, she added:

"I am not ashamed of my profession, but people stare and make my holiday disagreeable if they know. I suffered from public curiosity last year, and I want to escape it now."

"I shall keep your secret, then," said Mrs. Lawrence, smiling up at Isabel with a very grateful look.

Nellie's French nurse soon appeared, and many were the gestures, sighs and exclamations with which she heard of her little charge's sudden illness. Isabel withdrew, having ascertained that Marie was well used to such cases and knew all that was needed.

II.

During the next few days Isabel saw a good deal of Mrs. Lawrence, and the two women quickly got to know and like each other, though it seemed probable that their paths in life would tend in widely different directions. They were sitting one afternoon in a nest of pine-roots just above the hotel, when Mrs. Lawrence said:

"My husband will be here to-night. I am so glad he will meet you and that you will know him. And it is so fortunate that my brother-in-law is coming too."

"Why is that fortunate?" asked Isabel, lazily trying to catch a butterfly that was settling on a flower close by.

"It will do him good to see you. He is almost perfect in everybody's eyes, but in mine his one fault is unpardonable."

Isabel did not seem curious on the subject of Mrs. Lawrence's brother-in-law, so that lady went on gratuitously:

"He cannot bear to hear of women doing anything but what he calls domestic duties. He thinks I am a model of all the virtues, because I make Nellie's frocks and darn Tom's stockings myself. He would despise me if he thought I could do anything else."

"Then it is fortunate for you he does not know," said Isabel gravely.

"Oh, we are great friends," continued Mrs. Lawrence. "He is very clever and very learned. He has a fellowship at Oxford, and just now he is writing a book. He has never known any women, and that is why his notions are so absurd: I should like you to teach him right views."

"I never work in holiday time—when I can help it," she added laughing, as Mrs. Lawrence looked up quickly with an affectionate gesture:

"How lovely that waterfall looks now the sun is on it. Let us not talk for a little while."

Mrs. Lawrence was becoming used to the moods of her new friend. She sat quite still, only glancing now and then at the pale, quiet face with its intent look. Miss Clifford wore a simple dress of

some thin woollen stuff: it was neat and well-fitting, but "not quite worthy of her," the critical little matron thought. Yet it seemed as if no advantage of dress were needed to set off a face so rich in beauty of expression.

"A few minutes passed and the bell for the table d'hôte jangled out on the still air.

"Isn't that delightful?" said Isabel, rising, her eyes now full of mischief. "I am so hungry; aren't you? I have been wondering for the last five minutes whether they will give us carrot soup with mutton in it, or mutton soup with carrots in it: it is always one or the other."

"You were thinking of no such thing," cried Mrs. Lawrence, half resenting the sudden change. "You weren't thinking at all: you were dreaming."

"You know best," said Isabel gaily, as she gathered up her work and a couple of books which lay on the grass. "I must go and wake auntie. She never hears the bell."

A shadow fell across their path, and Isabel looked up just in time to see Mrs. Lawrence cast herself, with a low cry of delight, into the arms of a tall man.

"I want to introduce my husband to you, Miss Clifford," she said, with a beaming face. "Tom, you cannot imagine how kind Miss Clifford has been to me while you were away. You cannot be too grateful to her."

"Please believe that I am grateful, Miss Clifford," said Mr. Lawrence. "And intensely curious, also, to know into what difficulties my wife has managed to plunge herself in my absence."

"It is all a secret!" interposed his wife, hastily.

"Ah, then, I am sure to hear it," he returned, laughing, and drawing his wife's hand within his arm as they descended the steep slope behind the hotel. Isabel made up her mind that she liked Mr. Lawrence, and she was always friendly to people whom she liked. He had climbed the Wetterhorn two days before, and during dinner he gave a charming account of his experiences.

"How many were there in your party?" asked Isabel.

"One guide, with my brother and myself."

"By the way, when is Francis coming? I thought he would have been here with you," said Mrs. Lawrence.

"He will be here to-morrow. I don't expect he will stay long though. What do you think we heard at Grindelwald? There's a lady doctor coming here. Jackson met her last year at Montreux, where she performed some wonderful cures, and a friend of his heard that she is on her way to Rosenwald. You can imagine Frank's face when he heard that."

"Perhaps she's here now," suggested Isabel, with a steady look down the long table.

"Hardly," said Mr. Lawrence, following her look, which met only

portly Germans and one or two decidedly French-looking women. "I hope she will come, though. It would be interesting."

"Don't say that, Tom," pleaded his wife, feeling uncomfortable.

"Be sure and point her out to me, if you see her," said Isabel, "for of course she won't mind being stared at."

"Do you really think so?"

"Well, we won't stare. We'll only look," said Isabel, conscious that Mrs. Lawrence was dismayed.

"What are you going to look at, Isabel?" asked her aunt, as they rose from table.

"Only a curious specimen that Mr. Lawrence thinks he may be able to show me," she returned, with a pleasant smile.

Out on the terrace Mrs. Lawrence took hold of Isabel's arm. "My dear, what *do* you mean?" she said, in a low tone. "Tom would never tell anybody. And he loves Nellie so, that I think he ought to be told how ill she was."

"That seems an odd reason. But do what you think right," said Isabel, with a sigh. "It's only for the sake of my own comfort, and that, of course, isn't worth considering."

"Oh, then, I won't tell—if I can help it!" said Mrs. Lawrence, with a repentant impulse.

"Do as you like. Good night!" answered Isabel, and followed her aunt into the hotel.

"Now for the secret," said Mr. Lawrence, establishing his wife in an arm-chair, and placing himself at her feet.

"Tom, I can't tell you. Don't ask me!"

"But you shouldn't have secrets from your husband. It's wicked."

"You'll know it one day," replied his wife, with an air of superiority that wrought her doom.

"I can't wait. I'm impatient. I command you to tell me, Mrs. Lawrence."

"I never, never will, Mr. Lawrence. So there!" The little woman looked down on him with an expression of vast determination. He changed his tactics.

"I know if it were anything of importance you would tell me, so it is hardly worth asking about. Let's talk of something else."

"It's tremendously important."

"You have been excited over it, my little wife, whatever it was. Has Miss Clifford a genius for—what do you call it?—making babies' gowns?"

"Oh, you foolish Tom. As if I should be excited over that! No," and her voice trembled. "It was a great thing that she did for us—for you and for me, Tom."

"Was it about Nellie?" he asked, all the playfulness now thrown aside.

"Oh, she told me not to tell you, but I must. Nellie was so ill one night; I was frightened; I could not leave her even to call Marie, and

I did not know what to do. But Miss Clifford came in, and did everything for her, and gave her medicine, and made her well. She is the doctor you have heard of," and Mrs. Lawrence hid her face on her husband's shoulder, as the memory of that dreadful night came over her again.

"My darling, I never thought of that," he said gently. Then: "So Miss Clifford wants her good deeds to be done in secret?"

"Last year the people staying at the hotel at Montreux used to stare at her and point her out so rudely that she cannot bear to let anyone here know. You must never breathe it to Francis, mind!"

"It would do Frank good," began Mr. Lawrence.

"Tom, I have a special reason of my own for wishing him not to know."

"Oh, you designing woman! Is that a secret too?" said her husband, as he rose to carry her chair within doors.

III.

Francis Lawrence arrived at Rosenwald the next day, and the elder Miss Clifford fully agreed in his sister-in-law's good opinion of him. Isabel had long ago warned her aunt that her profession must be kept a secret on these holiday tours. Accordingly the old lady held aloof from all such topics, and found the young man very modest, sensible and obliging, as she told Isabel. Both ladies became more and more intimate with the Lawrences, and several excursions were made, in which Isabel only could join, for her aunt was well pleased to sit on the terrace for hours at a time knitting, reading and "thinking," as she said. Isabel was always accompanied by Mr. Lawrence, and Francis attended his sister-in-law, of whom he was evidently very fond. Consciously or unconsciously, Mrs. Lawrence talked a great deal of her new friend. Isabel's singing for Nellie, Isabel's reading aloud, Isabel's gentleness, candour, earnestness, fun—all these formed fruitful themes of discourse. To do Mrs. Lawrence justice, she would have talked as ceaselessly to her husband about Isabel if she had been alone with him, but it cannot be denied that she cherished the hope of making her two friends like one another. She was, therefore, greatly delighted when, one day, by some accident, Frank and Isabel went on together, and she was left with her husband. She longed to express her satisfaction, but with the instinct of a womanly woman, she said nothing, and her husband seemed to think only of the thundershower that threatened, but happily did not fall.

Isabel meanwhile enjoyed her climb. They went too fast for comfortable conversation, but now and then they interchanged remarks which showed that their thoughts ran in the same channel, and that they readily understood one another. They talked of the people whom they met, and of the sad change which travellers had wrought in the once brave and independent peasantry around.

"I cannot enjoy the mountains when I see that," said Isabel, looking towards a young girl who was carrying down the steep path a load of luggage which a strong man would call heavy.

"Yes," he said gravely, "this is the worst effect of all." As the girl passed he stood aside with a certain deference in his attitude. "Your heart is right," thought Isabel, "however wrong your head may be." She did not feel inclined to pursue the subject any further. They talked of other things, and Isabel soon found herself asking questions and receiving answers, much, as she told Mrs. Lawrence the next morning, in the style of the "Child's Guide to Knowledge."

"To be sure. Frank knows everything—except the 'pros' for women's rights!" said his sister-in-law, laughing.

"Don't use those words; I have an intense dislike to them," said Isabel.

"What words, may I ask?" And Mr. Lawrence appeared on the terrace, followed by his brother.

"Women's rights," said Mrs. Lawrence, mischievously.

"They are detestable words!" came from Frank, with vehemence; "I am glad you don't like them, Miss Clifford."

Isabel felt that she was misunderstood, but she did not choose to explain. Mrs. Lawrence was considerate enough to change the subject.

"Where shall we go this afternoon?" she said to her husband. "Miss Clifford leaves to-morrow. It is so sad, Isabel. Only we shall see something of you in London next winter."

"I am sorry we shall lose you. My wife and Nellie and I are all very grateful to you," said Mr. Lawrence in his gentlest tone. Francis scarcely noticed it; but he looked a great deal, Mrs. Lawrence thought. Isabel only answered with regret in her voice: "It has been delightful here."

"We can climb the Simmelhorn in two hours," said Tom, consulting "Bædeker."

"Then, let us do that," said Mrs. Lawrence; and Isabel assented. She went away to find her aunt, who was writing in the salon, and Mr. Lawrence strolled away to where Nellie, under her nurse's care, was making a bouquet for her mother. Francis was left alone with his sister-in-law, and she instantly divined that this arrangement met his wishes. He remained silent for a few minutes, watching her pretty hands, which were busily embroidering a little frock. At last he spoke.

"Where is Miss Clifford going?"

"To London. That is where they live. Why?"

"Do you think I might call and see them there?"

"You must ask her aunt. She will probably invite you to call when she is saying good-bye. You are a favourite with all old ladies, Frank!"

"She is not like anyone I ever met," said Frank earnestly.

'She is quite different from other women somehow." This might have referred to the elder Miss Clifford, but Mrs. Lawrence was now too sympathetic to be mischievous.

"I hope we shall often have her with us," she said. 'I cannot afford to lose sight of her."

More silence followed and then Frank began again.

"Nora!"

"Yes."

"Do you—have you any idea—I mean ——"

"I know what you mean, Frank, dear! Have patience. I cannot tell. But I know what you would say."

"You always do know," he said, with a grateful look.

"Don't be hasty, Frank. She is a woman worth winning. But remember that she had never seen you a fortnight ago. And she knows us so very little."

"I don't suppose she could ever care for me," he said sadly; "but one day I should like to try. There's no harm in trying. But I will do whatever you think best."

The party set off for their last climb, and Frank and Isabel went on as before. But Mrs. Lawrence felt unreasonably anxious with regard to her brother-in-law's happiness. She knew his strong prejudices, and she feared that somehow he would exhibit them to Isabel in their narrowest aspect, and repel her before he had begun to win her. Her fears were amply justified. An evil genius seemed to prompt his words.

"It is curious that so many women are eager for what they call their rights," he said. "I never knew one who cared for them or who would take them if they were offered. But then, I have been fortunate in my experience."

"I don't dislike the rights," said Isabel, feeling that now she ought to explain. "I dislike the words because they are so often wrongly used."

"Just so," he returned. "Those who use them have no true notion of what the highest rights of women are. They step down from their own platform to mingle with the crowd, and then they complain that we do not respect them. They lay hold of our work and forsake their own ——"

"It is hard to say what is a woman's work," interrupted Isabel, whose cheeks were glowing now.

"Surely not," he said. "She is to be the inspiration of her husband, his comforter and help. Should she not marry, are there not the poor to occupy her, if family duties are wanting? *That* is the sphere in which women are always queens, always worthy of all honour." He spoke with enthusiasm, almost as if he were unconscious of her presence. But Isabel, full of her own thoughts, said very quietly:

"Then you would not approve of—women doctors, for instance?"

"Certainly not," he said with emphasis. "I could not respect such women."

The words, "I am one," leaped to Isabel's lips but got no further. The thought: "What is that to him?" came next and forbade her to speak. She had almost forgotten what Mrs. Lawrence had told her, for she and Francis had seemed to agree so well in all else. She was angry with him, and angry with herself for being angry.

"I do not care for his opinion!" she said to herself proudly, as she went on before him. Her silence made him fear that his words had annoyed her. "Perhaps I ought not to have said that to you," he said.

"You ought not to say it to anyone," she answered. "You ought not to think it." As she spoke she looked down on him with glowing cheeks. Every feature was eloquent, yet he hardly knew what she meant. He felt stunned and then distressed, as she turned and walked on before him with a quick, resolute step. Presently the path grew difficult, and passing her without speaking, he offered her his hand.

"Thank you. I need no help," she said.

"Pray forgive me if I have hurt you!" he pleaded, standing still on the narrow path.

"*Hurt*," she answered with a little laugh. "That is a strong word to use."

His quick perception told him that this was intended to convey, "Nothing that you could say would hurt me." He felt desperate. Nora's words sounded in his ears: "Have patience . . . . she is a woman worth winning . . . . don't be hasty!" but he flung them recklessly away.

"Will you sit down here for a moment," he said. "I want to tell you something that you ought to know." His tone was unconsciously hard and cold in the effort to seem unmoved, and she sat down with no thought of his purpose. Standing before her, he began:

"Nora tells me that I should wait, but I cannot do that, for I love you so dearly that I cannot help telling you, even though I know there is very little hope that you could ever love me ——"

She looked up at him now with one swift glance—it might have been of pity or it might have been only of surprise. Then with her eyes on the ground and in tones as quiet and as full of effort as his own, she answered:

"You should not love me."

"I *should* not? Why?"

"Because you could not respect me," she said, looking once more into his face. "I am a doctor."

IV.

Some months passed by before the Lawrences returned to their little home in Kensington. Isabel and Mrs. Lawrence had kept up a correspondence, and though on Isabel's side it was necessarily scanty,

or she was very busy, their friendship grew steadily. One day in January a note arrived from Mrs. Lawrence, saying that they were now at home, and begging that Miss Clifford and Isabel would dine with them on the following evening.

"You can go, Auntie," she said.

"And you too, dear, can't you?"

"Oh no, I cannot spare an evening just now. I shall go and see them soon enough."

Miss Clifford went and much enjoyed the quiet little dinner.

"Mr. Francis came in and stayed half-an-hour. Did you know he had taken orders, Isabel? How strange that you forgot to tell me. He looks terribly worn. Mrs. Lawrence says he works much too hard. He is not at all strong, I'm afraid."

"How does Nellie look?" asked Isabel, gazing into the fire.

"Quite well, little darling. She sat on her uncle's knee nearly all the time he was there. I don't think they ought to let her sit up so late. And she asked him if he remembered the lady that made her well at Rosenwald, and brought your picture to show him. We were all *so* amused, for you had kept it such a secret. He was embarrassed though, poor man, and I don't wonder after some of the things Mrs. Lawrence has told me he says about women."

"Did you see Mr. Lawrence's pictures? They are said to be very good?"

"I saw some of his own, but I'm no judge. There was a small Bellini that they spent nearly their last penny in buying at Milan. Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence had some joke about it, but Mr. Francis said they had no right to go about robbing churches."

Plainly Miss Clifford would talk of Mr. Francis to-night. So Isabel made no further remarks, and listened with a somewhat weary air to all that her aunt had to say. Like most women, the old lady took a deeper interest than ever in her favourite, now that he had become a clergyman.

The next day as Isabel was going out she found a poor woman waiting to speak to her.

"You 'tended my little boy in the hospital, my lady," said the woman. "Him as had the bad knee."

"I remember you," said Isabel, after a moment of reflection, for she had attended only too many bad knees at the Children's Hospital. "Did he get on well at the Convalescent Home?"

"Yes, my lady; he is there now. But my girl is bad and I thought you'd maybe come and look at her. I think it's the fever she's got."

Isabel knew from the woman's quiet, despairing look that she was one whose life was a long battle against want and misery of every kind. She promised to call and see the child within an hour. The "home" as the woman called it was a wretched room in a wretched alley in Seven Dials. Familiar as she had now become with such

scenes, Isabel was as acutely pained as ever at the sight of the suffering of the poverty-stricken. Her one consolation was that she was so often able to bring relief.

She knelt by the child who lay on a heap of rags on the floor.

"Her throat is sore, my lady, and she has pains like the rheumatics. I wish she was in the hospital too, only the neighbours told me they wouldn't take her in if it was fever."

"She ought to have been sent before," said Isabel. "We cannot move her now."

Scarlet fever was fully developed, she told the mother; and great care must be taken, for it was in a dangerous form. She gave some directions and then went away to find a nursing-sister who would help the mother to take the needful watching in turn. The next day and the next she visited the little patient, each time bringing something to make her more comfortable. A soft mattress replaced the bed of rags, and as her mother laid her upon it, the child said:

"Now please bring the gentleman."

"Whom does she want?" asked Isabel.

"It's the clergyman, ma'am. He came here a few weeks ago and ever since she's begging me to bring him again. He told her a story and it's been running in her head ever since. I think she was just beginning to be bad that day, and she wanders like about it now."

"I want the gentleman," murmured the child again; and then, as if repeating his words, she said, with a happy smile: "He put His arms around 'em and He wouldn't let 'em be sent away."

"She never asks for nothing but that," said the poor woman, looking sadly down on the flushed face of her child. "But I don't like to trouble the gentleman."

"I think he would be glad to come if you ask him," said Isabel. "But you must tell him that it is scarlet fever."

Next day she found the small patient decidedly worse. She had been delirious in the night and had been pleading for "the story" that her friend had told her.

"So I saw his housekeeper this morning and asked her to tell him. He needn't come now unless he likes," said the mother, who evidently had small faith in clergymen.

But this clergyman came. Isabel had hardly left the alley when he entered it and found his way to the little room. The child recognised him at once and he said a few simple words that soothed her and that helped her mother also. When he went away he promised to come again on the morrow; but when the morrow came, little Maggie was no longer within reach of his words. The mother thanked him with a few silent tears and said as he was going down the staircase:

"I'd never have made bold to ask you, sir, but Miss Clifford said I might."

He turned quickly and said: "Has Miss Clifford been here?"

"Indeed she has, sir, and did all she could for us. She's well known to all the neighbours here for her goodness. There's my boy she sent to a Home at the sea-side for a month when he was discharged from the hospital—and if anyone could have saved Maggie, she would."

"Remember that your child is saved," said the clergyman, earnestly. "Saved from all the sorrow and pain and hardship of this life." And with a kindly shake of the hand, he went back to his study.

A few days afterwards Mrs. Lawrence wrote to Isabel saying that her brother was ill of scarlet fever. "His housekeeper gave him a message from a poor woman asking him to go and see her child who had it badly. We suppose he took it then," wrote Mrs. Lawrence.

"I am glad he went," said Isabel to herself.

V.

For many days Francis Lawrence lay fighting with the fever that seemed to have fastened on him with a death grip. Isabel heard of him constantly, for her aunt took pains to find out every day how he was. Maggie's mother, whom Isabel did not fail to visit after the child's funeral, told her of his goodness, saying, with the usual despondency of her class, "He 'll die, my lady, for sure. Such as him isn't for this world."

But at last news came that he was to be moved to the sea-side, then that the journey had been accomplished, and that he was none the worse. Spring was now far advanced, and the leaves that had struggled into existence in London squares retained but little of their early freshness. Isabel was tired. The winter had been hard upon her, and she longed to lay down her work for a few days, and feel no responsibility. But no one guessed how tired she was, for she went about her work as carefully and as cheerfully as ever. The children in the hospital looked forward to her visits as to one of their treats, and she had many patients among the poor.

"The Lawrences are all back again, and Mr. Francis is with them," announced Miss Clifford one day when Isabel came home. Isabel made no reply, but leaned back in an arm-chair.

"You are doing too much, dear! I know you want a rest. Yes, they aren't afraid of the infection now. Nellie didn't know him when she saw him; he is such a shadow. But he goes about as usual. I told him we were at home to-morrow, and he said he would like to come with his sister."

"Very well, Auntie. There must be a first time," she added to herself, "and it is well to get it over."

Several visitors had come and gone the next afternoon before Mrs. Lawrence and Francis appeared. He was indeed only a shadow, and Isabel had a strange sense of beginning anew with him as she

saw his altered dress and his altered face. Yet before her eyes there rose the vision of that day upon the Simmelhorn when she had left him with the words that made the life-long separation between them : " You could not respect me." She saw the burning flush of pain that had suffused those pale cheeks, and the hopeless appeal in his eyes as she had passed him to return to the hotel. After a few minutes of general conversation he came close to the table where she was making tea and said :

" May I ask for a few words with you alone, now or soon? I will not detain you long—or say anything to trouble you," he added very gently as he saw that she was moved.

" I shall be alone at this time to-morrow," she answered simply, and held out her hand, for Mrs. Lawrence was taking leave. Isabel was glad to notice that her friend seemed to know nothing of what had just taken place : she could not bear the interference of even the most loving hand at this time. Yet Mrs. Lawrence saw more than she appeared to see.

The next morning passed quickly, and Isabel had only returned from an extra visit after luncheon when Francis was announced. She went to the dining-room, where he had been shown by her directions, and found him standing by the mantelpiece. He declined a chair, but placed one for her and began abruptly :

" I only want to tell you what I have learned since I knew you first. I had been living in my books and in myself when I met you, and I knew almost nothing of the world where you were living and working, and where I am now. I thought I knew my own duty and yours. I was mistaken. I knew neither. I was utterly wrong. Forgive me."

" Have you finished? " asked Isabel, looking up for a moment. " Yes, I forgive you for what you said about us all. I have nothing to forgive for myself. But I am glad that you understand that one cannot live among these people and see the terrible things that we see without longing to help them. But I ought to ask you to forgive me," she went on smiling. " Do you know that it was I who told little Maggie's mother to ask you to visit her? "

" Yes—I shall be grateful to you all my life for that," he said in his quietest tones. " But now I must go. I want you to understand that though I never can forget—I never can cease to love you—I will not intrude my love upon you again. You need not fear that I shall look for any return. And yet—" he went on as if in spite of himself—" if you ever can forget what I once said and thought—if you ever can give me a chance to win you, I love you so that I think I might succeed. There is work that we might do together—you and I. Oh, Isabel, if I might only try to win you ! "

" You may try," she said softly.

THE LADY'S COIN.

A Story of New Year's Eve.

I.

ALREADY, though barely three o'clock, the gas in the shops was lighted; the shops still decked in their Christmas trappings, and thronged by happy faces intent on New Year's gifts. The New Year—so soon expected—seemed hovering in the air; even workhouses had caught a gleam of hope.

"You must mind and get well enough to eat some roast beef at the feast to-morrow," said the nurse, passing swiftly down the whitewashed ward of one of their infirmaries. She was young and rosy-cheeked—a favourite—and the patients looked at her and chuckled.

"You too, she said, going on to the farthest bed: "I shall look out for one of the primest cuts for you."

Two deep dark eyes looked up at her from a white and wasted face. A long bony hand was outstretched to clasp her dress.

"Stoop down—I want to speak to you," said a hollow voice, just able to make itself heard.

"All right—it will be a treat to hear you for once. You don't trouble us with much of your tongue!"

Her laugh was careless, but it broke suddenly off as she inspected the patient more closely. A male patient, on the shady side of middle age—his dark hair dashed with gray—his burning eyes the brighter from the whiteness of his face.

"Nurse, I'm going at last—and you've been good to me—you'll grant me one last favour?"

"What is it?" asked the young woman, kneeling at his side. It was true, she saw. He was going. She knew the signs only too well.

"This—" and his dying hand plucked feebly at a narrow black cord about his neck—"See—I'll show it to you—I've worn it thirty years, as I wear it now. You see it?"

She bent nearer to examine the object through which the cord was strung. He had drawn it up for her inspection, from the spot close to his heart where it had rested.

"Well now!" ejaculated the nurse, restoring it after a lengthened survey, and smoothing the sheet over the wasted form, with a tender hand, rough though it was: "There's a tale belonging to that, I'll be bound," she added, looking, with a softer interest, at the shadowy features. They were finely moulded. Yes, he had been a handsome man, once. Tall and broad, too, he must have been. And like a gentleman, somehow. And dying in a workhouse infirmary!

"Listen—listen," he whispered, grasping her dress again with one hand, while the other lay upon his breast enfolding his treasure. "Will you promise me? You can manage it, if you will. I want you to promise that it shall be buried with me—just where it is now —over my heart."

"I promise," said the young nurse. She was too young to be hardened. Two great tears filled her eyes as she spoke.

"Thank you," he said feebly, sinking back. "I know you won't forget. Thirty years! Thirty years to-day!"

Once afterwards, as if in sleep, he murmured these last words. It was a sleep from which, on earth, he never woke.

II.

"No, Rose. I will not hear of it. I am acting for your good. You will thank me for my firmness, some day."

"Oh, mother, mother! If such a day ever came, I should be a demon! Thank you for parting me from Godfrey? You don't know him, or you couldn't talk so."

"Whether I know him or not, my dear child, I know that he is ruined."

"And I am to forsake him because of that? Ruined. No such thing. He has plenty of brains and plenty of strength; he can work and earn his living like other men. And I would like to work with him."

"My poor little dreamer! But we have had enough of this. You may see him once more, at the ball to-night, to say good-bye; I will grant you so much; and then it is at an end."

The lady rose as she spoke; a vision of beauty and of grandeur which far outshone the girlish sweetness of the young daughter weeping at her side. Tall and stately, exquisite in form and feature alike, the advances of time skilfully disguised by arts almost rivalling nature, she looked every inch what she was—a goddess of the fashionable world. Once a distinguished beauty—a beauty still, although the mother of grown-up children—a Marchioness, moreover, married to one of our principal statesmen—she had a right, most people thought, to the cold and majestic pride by which, in private no less than in public, her manners and appearance were characterized. She could smile also; and when she smiled, all hearts were still taken by storm. She had smiled, once, upon the Godfrey of whom her child had spoken. But he was then rich, a fitting match for Rose, to whom she had suffered him to engage himself. Now his fortunes were changed: an unexpected claimant had turned up for his estates; there had been a lawsuit, a *cause célèbre*, ending unfortunately for Godfrey. He was still a gentleman to the backbone, honourable and true, but nothing any more in "Society."

"I'll never marry anyone else," sobbed Rose, "Never—never. You may separate us if you choose, mother, but you can't tear him out of my heart."

"For that I have no desire, my dear," said the Marchioness, with a touch of her fascinating smile. "He will fade out of it quite soon enough, in the course of nature. You are fresh from the world of novels, Rose, as yet. In real life hearts are not so unchangeable."

"Then I hate real life, mother. But I don't believe it."

"Perhaps I should not have believed it once," said the Marchioness. "I knew a girl once—just your age—as devotedly in love as any of your poets could desire. We were bosom friends, that girl and I——" She paused for a moment, and Rose looked up, her attention arrested. The Marchioness was smiling still; but the smile was just a little fixed. "Yes, she loved someone so much that when they were parted, she thought she could never be happy again. She wished she could die, for a time. But it passed over."

"And did she marry anyone else?"

"Yes, before they had been separated a year. He had promised to come back if he were fortunate, and try again. But he was not fortunate. He failed. And she had wise parents—such as myself. They enabled her to see that if he had been worthy of her love, if he had cared for it as she imagined he did, he would not have failed—he would have come back with honours. So she saw how undignified it would be on her part to wait for one who would not work for her; and by dint of resolution she overcame her foolishness, and made a sensible marriage."

"Her parents made it for her, I suppose."

"They convinced her of her duty in the matter, certainly; as I trust, my dear, some day to convince you."

"Never," cried Rose passionately. But the Marchioness smiled again, and sailed from the room.

On the stairs she met an elderly little man, his brow peevish, his hands full of papers.

"No rest even in this short holiday, Claremont? You will be able to come with us to the ball to-night, I conclude?"

"Impossible, Eleanor. You must make my excuses. I have most important committee business to look into this evening. I can't on any account be interrupted."

He passed her rapidly, and vanished. The Marchioness saw no occasion to trouble him concerning Rose and Godfrey. He was a complete Gallio in the affairs of his younger children, and left them all to his wife.

III.

"Such a romantic story, my lady. I'm sure it would interest your ladyship."

It was the Marchioness's maid who spoke. She was arraying her mistress for the ball: a fancy dress ball, masked, to be held at a

great house, to please some great lady's fancy, on that New Year's Eve.

"You are dying to tell it, Palmer, at all events; so tell on," said the Marchioness, languidly.

"It was my cousin, my lady; I had it from the cousin I told your ladyship of, who came up from the country in October: nurse at the Wall Street Union, my lady, if you remember. She looked in just now, being out for an hour or so; it cheers her up to see me sometimes, poor girl. It was a man who died this afternoon in the Union, my lady; how she can have the nerve, I've no idea! she had actually laid him out."

"There, that will do, Palmer," said the Marchioness: "What about the man?"

"Well, he died, my lady—and before he died, he made my cousin promise that something he wore round his neck should be buried with him. On his heart, my lady. And my cousin, she's keeping her word."

"And what was this mysterious thing? Therein, I suppose, lies the romance," said the Marchioness, lightly.

"Yes, my lady. Never did I hear! It was the half of a sixpence, with a hole in it; and he'd had it strung round his neck by a bit of cord. It was an old sixpence, most beautifully marked—my cousin says she never saw such cleverness—with a name cut out in the silver; and under the name: 'New Year's Eve, /57.' And there it lies on the poor fellow's heart."

"And the name?"

"Are you feeling unwell, my lady? Shall I get you some sal-volatile?"

"No.—Go on.—The name. What was the name?"

"The name was 'Nelly,' my lady. That was the inscription:—

'NELLY.
'New Year's Eve,
'/57.'

Some sad story belongs to that, my lady, we may depend. The man—my cousin believes he was a gentleman once. He'd only been in a few days; brought from some poor lodging, in a state of destitution, she said. They think he gave a wrong name—'John Brown,' or some such, he called himself. But he seems to have had no one belonging to him!"

"And he had worn—that—all those years?"

"Thirty years, my lady," he said. "Thirty years to-day. My lady, I must really get you the sal volatile. Your ladyship's gone as white as a sheet; it's that nasty palpitation again!"

"Yes, Palmer, you can leave me for a little while. I will ring. I must be quiet."

The maid was alarmed, but she knew the Marchioness too well to

disobey. She left the room. An instant later, she thought she heard a cry, and returned. But when she listened at the door, all was silence.

IV.

THE ball had begun. Gay figures in all imaginable eccentricities of attire, and all closely masked, filled the brilliantly-lighted saloons. Some danced; some chatted in groups; some roamed from room to room, in amused endeavour to solve the surrounding problems. It was difficult—in most cases impossible—to pronounce who was who. But two—a young man dressed like a crusader, and a girl like a Watteau shepherdess, had speedily discovered one another.

They had danced together, and now they were sitting amid the orange-trees of a beautiful conservatory, talking in low tones.

"Never mind, darling," said the young man. "I will live for you, I will work for you—I will think of you only—and when I have won my spurs, I will come back:—if only you care enough to wait?"

"Oh, Godfrey, you know, you know! As if I could ever think of anyone else! Oh, to hear mother talk! But Godfrey, she doesn't know what love is. She has never loved anyone herself, you see;—perhaps I oughtn't to say it, when there is my father—but—he was so much older than she was, and he cares only for politics—it never could have been like you and me! You don't think me undutiful, Godfrey? You understand?"

Understand? of course he did!—and so they talked on and on, all the world to one another; forgetting the time, forgetting everyone outside that conservatory. At last, however, Rose remembered the Marchioness, from whose wing she had escaped.

"I hope she won't be angry with me for staying so long. She said I might be with you this one night. But perhaps we had better try to find her now."

They tried, but were unsuccessful; so, nothing loth, returned to their hiding-place amid the orange-blossoms.

Meanwhile a tall figure, in a long black cloak, was knocking at the workhouse door in Wall Street. A woman had called to make inquiries about the man who had died that afternoon, was the message shortly brought to the master.

"She says, sir, she thinks she can identify him, and in that case his friends would not wish him to have a pauper funeral."

So the master allowed her — a respectable woman evidently; handsome too, beneath her heavy black veil—to be conducted to the mortuary. The nurse escorted her, holding a lantern, across a paved courtyard.

"You're not nervous, ma'am, at seeing a dead person?"

"I shall not be nervous if. . . . if he is the person I knew."

The nurse unlocked a strong door, they entered a stone-flagged

room. It had only one tenant—a long figure stretched, covered by a sheet, upon a bier. The woman paused suddenly.

"I'm afraid you're nervous, after all, ma'am," said the nurse.

"No. But—I must be left alone here for a little while. Go outside and guard the door, and I will reward you."

The girl hesitated, but there was gold in the stranger's hand. She looked at her curiously and yielded.

"You won't be long, then? I'll wait five minutes," she said; and withdrew, leaving the lantern.

The woman went up to the bier. She was trembling from head to foot, but her will was strong. She raised the sheet. There was the dead face. Haggard, worn, wasted—the eyes no longer burning to relieve the whiteness. The features strongly marked, the dark hair dashed with gray, the expression that of one who has suffered long, who has been beaten down in the battle of life—tired, tired—and broken hearted. Round the throat lay the narrow black cord.

"John!" said the woman. "John!"

No voice answered. But suddenly the bells of New Year's Eve rang out from a neighbouring tower.

"Thirty years ago to-night," she said. "This very night thirty years ago!" Then she bent down and kissed the cold and care-worn brow. Thirty years ago had those motionless arms been around her. But her kiss was unheeded now.

And outside, the bells were ringing as they had rung on that evening of her recollection.

V.

"It's the most curious thing, my lady! You remember what I was telling your ladyship about the poor man at the workhouse?"

"I remember."

"Well, that very night, quite late, my lady, a woman, who wouldn't give her name, called to identify him. They let her see him, and it seems she knew who he was; the family must have sent her, all secret, wishing not to be disgraced, no doubt, by the appearance of names. And next day an undertaker called and said a lawyer had sent him to arrange for the funeral; and the poor man was buried very respectable in Brompton Cemetery, and an order given for a stone. But the curious thing, my lady, is this. When they put him in the coffin, my cousin found that the coin had disappeared."

"The coin!"

"The sixpence, my lady, that I told you of; that he'd worn round his neck. My cousin felt, to make sure it was right, remembering her promise; and the cord had been cut off short, and the sixpence was gone! No one knew who took it, and they'll never find out—there must be a sight of queer folks about a workhouse. My cousin would have suspected the woman, only she seemed so respectable. But she's set it down as a mystery, and so it must abide."

"There are many mysteries in this world," said Rose, to whom Parker duly reported the strange story. Her mind was just now full of another mystery—the extraordinary change in her mother as regarded herself and Godfrey.

Godfrey had called on New Year's Day, the day following the ball, to plead his cause once more; and, wonderful to relate, he had not pleaded in vain. The Marchioness, after hearing his arguments, had consented that Rose should wait for him; had promised, further, that her husband's political interest should be exerted on his behalf.

"It seems too wonderful to be true!" cried Rose. "Oh, mother, how good you are! but what has changed you so?" she said.

"Perhaps it was less a change than a revival," said the Marchioness.

A reply most enigmatical to Rose. But she was too happy to think about it.

VI.

New Year's Eve had come again, and again the bells were ringing the old year to his rest.

"Rose," said the Marchioness, "I have something to ask you. Come close to me."

Rose obeyed, her tears falling fast. For her mother was dying.

She had been pining all the year—from some affection of the heart, said the physicians. Pining in a stately manner, making no complaints—but pining nevertheless: until at length, still stately, she had taken to her bed. In November she had insisted that Rose and Godfrey—whose affairs were now in a prosperous condition—should be married. She wished, she said, to see them happy; and happy they undoubtedly were. But—somewhat suddenly at last—the end had come for the Marchioness.

She lay—not on a workhouse bed—but propped up with laced pillows; surrounded by every luxury that eye or mind could desire. It was New Year's Eve—and here was another death-bed: strange contrast to that pauper death-bed twelve months before!

"Rose," said the Marchioness, "when I am gone, you will find a little silk bag near my heart. You and Godfrey—you two only—may look inside; and then, I wish you to lay it with your own hands upon my heart again, and to see that it is buried with me in my coffin."

Rose promised; and an hour later, her mother had passed away. The little bag was found as she had said. Rose, her husband's arm supporting her, opened it, and looked within. There, strung upon a fragment of narrow black cord, lay the half of an old sixpence—encircled by a lock of hair—of dark hair, dashed with gray. And cut upon it, with wonderful skill, were these words: "Nelly. New Year's Eve. /57." It was placed as desired, upon her heart, to go down with her to her grave.

And the bells were ringing, as they had rung on that other New Year's Eve, one-and-thirty years ago.

E. Chilton.

VOLENTIBUS ANNIS.

—Virg.

No, weep and mourn them as we will,
We cannot bring them back;
They passed like sunshine from the hill,
And left as little track.

Youth's hopes and loves and happy dreams,
Our castles in the air,
Though built of morning's brightest beams,
What are they now—and where?

Our tender walks on twilight eves,
In tangled woods and dells,
Soothed by the sound of whispering leaves,
And breeze-borne village bells.

No laughter through the coppice rings,
Our gipsy jaunts are o'er;
Our harps—who'll tune the broken strings,
Or wake their music more?

Eyes look their last, hands meet and part,
And lips lie mute and cold;
What strains can ever touch the heart
Like those we heard of old?

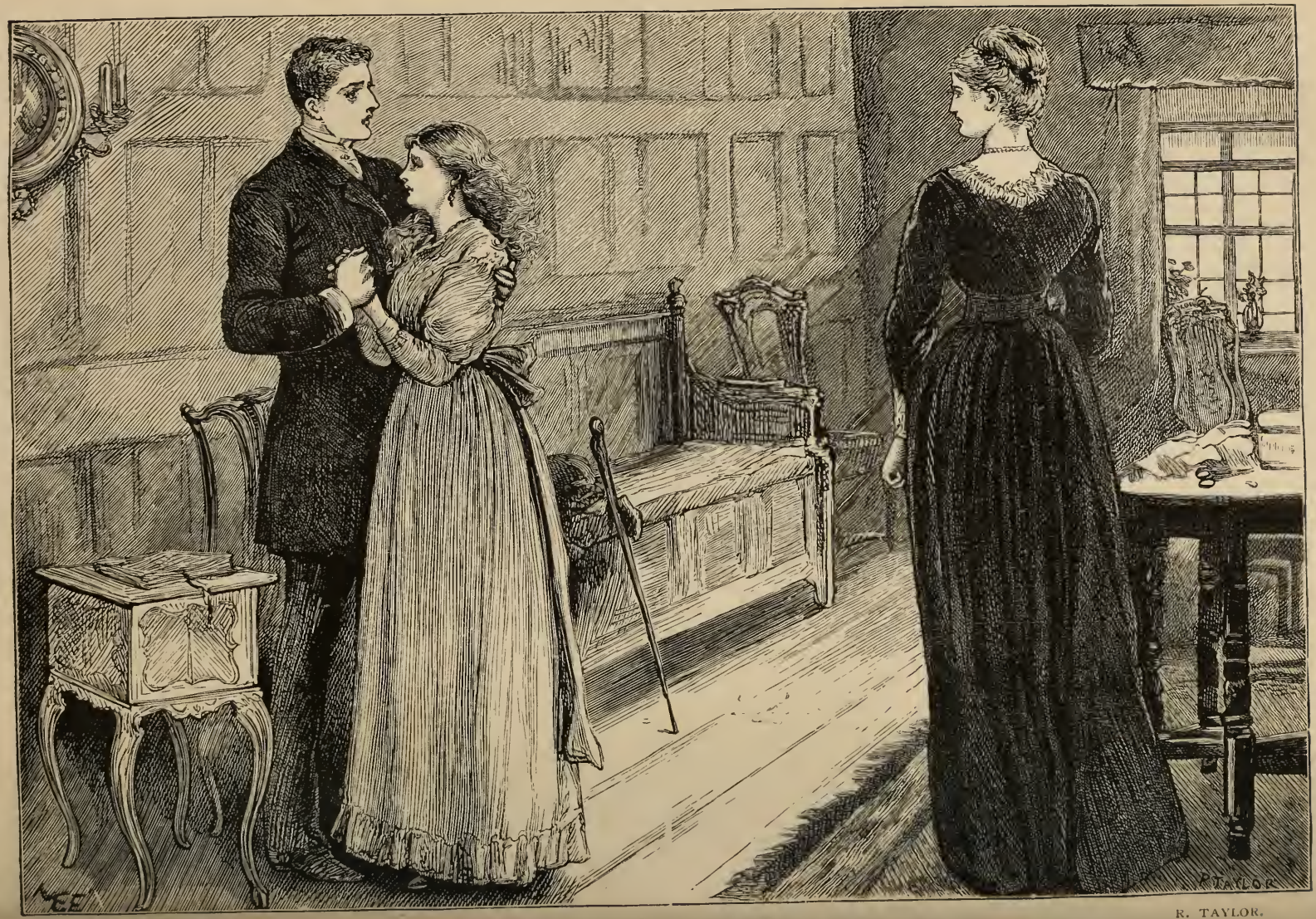
Our dearest earthly joys must die,
However sharp the pain,
And none but boys and girls should sigh
To have them back again.

For us the owl and ivied tower,
And bat on dusky wing,
Are fitter than the summer bower,
And song birds of the spring.

See but the nettle now, and briar,
Where Beauty's haunts have been,
And memory with her mournful lyre
Sole minstrel of the scene.

Those silent stars, the tranquil night,
Recall the vanished years;
Their mirth and smiles too soon took flight,
And left the gloom and tears.

Lindon Meadows.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1890.

THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER VI.

THE INFIRMARY PUPIL.

THE Reverend Mr. Elliot and his wife were seated one day in their home, a rural parsonage in one of the Midland counties, discussing plans and prospects for their numerous family. Mr. Elliot was the uncle of George Archer, who was his sister's child; but that has nothing, just now, to do with the story.

Though Mr. Elliot's living was a good one, he had much difficulty in making both ends meet, for his family were growing up and his sons were expensive. The present discussion concerned Thomas, the eldest son. He had served an apprenticeship to the medical profession, and a plan was in agitation to place him for improvement under Mr. Dicks, an eminent surgeon attached to the infirmary at Nearford, the county town.

Perhaps what had first given rise to the idea of placing him at Nearford was the fact that Mrs. Elliot had an aunt living there, who, they hoped, would give Tom a home for the period, which would be an economy: in Mr. Tom Elliot's case, a very great economy, for he was of the fraternity denominated "fast." Let it come from where it would, from somewhere or from nowhere, Tom must spend.

Mrs. Agatha Needham, a maiden lady, had lived in Nearford all her life, which was by no means a definite number of years, her own register saying forty-nine, and that of the church sixty-three. She possessed a very pretty property, had never shown herself backward in kindness and hospitality to her relations, and Mrs. Elliot had been encouraged to make the application as to Tom, intimating, what was really the truth, that should her aunt Agatha refuse her bold request they should be compelled to relinquish the placing Tom with Mr. Dicks, for the expense would be beyond their means. Mrs. Agatha's reply had arrived, and Mr. and Mrs. Elliot were discussing it.

She was very willing to receive Thomas, she wrote, provided he would undertake to observe certain conditions: that he would never

smoke, would never speak to her two maid-servants, except in her presence, and would always be in bed by half after ten, unless he was out with herself at a whist party. Let him promise this, and she would keep him, pay his laundress expenses, and allow him half-a-crown a week pocket money till his studies were over.

Mr. Thomas Elliot was called into the presence of his parents, promised obedience to the rules, and vowed they were just what he should have laid down for himself. Whether Mr. Elliot quite believed him is doubtful, from the urgent cautions he pressed upon him not to offend Mrs. Agatha. When Tom was released he went into explosions of laughter, especially touching the half-crown a week. He arrived at Nearford: a dashing young man of twenty-one, showy in dress, free in manner, but the pink of quiet propriety in the presence of Mrs. Agatha; he speedily became popular in Nearford, and Mrs. Agatha grew intensely proud of him.

"My dear Thomas," she exclaimed to him one morning at breakfast, "what an extraordinary smell of tobacco-smoke pervades the house when you are in it."

"It does, ma'am; it's highly disagreeable. Nearly makes me sick, sometimes."

"But what can it proceed from?" pursued Mrs. Agatha, sniffing very much over her muffin. "You assure me you do not smoke; you promised solemnly, you know."

"I smoke!" echoed Mr. Tom; "I touch a filthy cigar! It comes from my clothes."

"How does it get into them?" wondered Mrs. Agatha.

"They are such a set, aunt, at that infirmary—have cigars in their mouths from morning till night. Sometimes I can't see across our dissecting-room for the smoke. Of course my clothes get impregnated with it."

"Dear me, Thomas, how sorry I am for you! But don't talk about dissecting-rooms, if you please. The smell must also get into your eyes, and hair, and whiskers!"

"So it does, uncommon strong. But I douse my head in the big basin, in a morning, and that takes it off."

"The governors of the infirmary ought to be reported to the Lord-lieutenant," cried Mrs. Agatha, warmly. "I never heard of anything so shameful. How can they think of permitting the patients to smoke?"

"It's not the patients, aunt," returned Mr. Tom, smothering a grin. "What should bring them in the dissecting-room: unless—— ahem!—they are carried there?"

"Then is it the doctors?"

"No: it's the pupils."

"Misguided youths," ejaculated Mrs. Agatha. "And you, a clergyman's son, have to associate with them! Never you learn smoking, my dear Thomas. But about this smell: I really do not

know what is to be done. The maids commence coughing whenever they enter your bed-room, for the fumes of smoke there, they tell me, are overpowering."

"Ah, I know they are. It's where all my clothes hang."

"Suppose you were to get some lumps of camphor, and sew in your pockets?" suggested Mrs. Agatha, alighting on a bright idea. "If it keeps fevers from the frame, it may keep tobacco-smoke from clothes. Get sixpennyworth, Thomas."

"I'll get a shilling's worth," said Tom. "Though I fear its properties don't reach smoke."

"Oh, Thomas, I forgot. Did you hear the noise in the house last night?"

"Noise?" responded Mr. Tom.

"A noise on the stairs, like somebody bumping up them. It was just two o'clock, for I heard the clock strike. When Rachel came to dress me this morning, she said it must have been Minny, racing after the mice. But I never heard her make such a noise before. I hope it did not disturb you."

"Not at all, aunt," answered Tom, burying his face in his handkerchief: "I never woke till half an hour ago. Cats do make an awful noise sometimes. I'm off to the infirmary."

"And you have eaten no breakfast! I can't think what the lad lives upon."

In the hall, as Mr. Thomas was dashing across it, he encountered the housemaid, a pretty girl with cherry cheeks.

"Look here, sir," she said. "See what we picked up this morning. If mistress had found it, instead of me and cook, whatever would you have done?"

"My latch-key! I must have dropped it when I came in, in the night. But after a punch jollification, following on a tripe supper, one's perceptive faculties are apt to be obscured. That's a fact undisputed in physics, Rachel, my dear." And as Tom dropped the latch-key into his pocket, he acknowledged his obligation to the finder in a way of his own.

"Now, Mr. Thomas," remonstrated Rachel, "I have threatened fifty times that I'd tell missis of you, and now I will. You want to get me out of my place, sir, going on in this way."

"Do," cried Tom, "go and tell her at once. And harkee, my dear, if you and cook get talking to the old lady about the smoke in my bed-room, I'll shoot the first of you I come near. You should put the windows and door open."

Just as the incorrigible Tom walked off, Mrs. Agatha Needham opened the breakfast-room door, and down dropped the maid upon her hands and knees, and began rubbing away at the oilcloth.

"Rachel! was that my nephew talking to you?"

"Mr. Thomas has gone out, ma'am."

"Yes. Who was he talking to before he went?"

"Talking to, ma'am? Oh, I remember; he asked about his umbrella. I think he must have left it at the infirmary, or at Mr. Dicks's."

"Asking a necessary question I will look over," said Mrs. Agatha; "but should he ever show a disposition to speak with you upon indifferent subjects, you will come straight off to me, and report him, Rachel; for it is not allowed."

"Very well, ma'am."

From the above specimen of Mr. Tom Elliot, it may be wondered how he contrived to remain an inmate of Mrs. Agatha Needham's, and continue in that lady's good graces. It was a marvel to Tom himself, and he was wont to say in that favourite resort, the dissecting-room, that though he had got on the ancient maiden's blind side, he had more trouble than enough to keep himself there.

One day sundry of the infirmary pupils were assembled in the above-mentioned choice retreat. The relics lying about were not very pleasant to look upon for an uninitiated eye, but it seemed that the young gentlemen engaged in the cheering business of studying these lopped branches did not find their occupation particularly disagreeable. A looker-on might have described them as being rather "jolly." There were seven of them: four had short pipes in their mouths, and the three others cigars, and they were smoking away with all their might, Mr. Tom Elliot being amongst them, and some pewter pots of beer, which stood on the table in close contact with the—relics.

"How did old Moss come out last night?" inquired one, with a shock head of very red hair, as he sat on a deal side-table, and kicked his feet against a neighbouring wall. "Old Moss" being a botanist, who was then giving lectures in the city which the infirmary pupils were expected to attend.

"What's the good of asking me?" responded Tom Elliot. "Pass the pot, Jones."

"I'd got a better engagement, and didn't show," resumed the first speaker. "Were you not there either, Elliot?"

"I just was there. And got jammed close to two of the loveliest girls I ever saw in my life. One of 'em is a prize. You are beginning that arm wrong, Davis."

"Teach your grandmother," returned Mr. Davis. "I was practising on arms when you were in your leading-strings."

"Elliot needn't talk. He'll never be any good; hasn't got the knack of holding the knife."

"It's because I don't practice. I asked old What's-his-name, the sexton of St. Luke's, how much he'd charge for a subject."

"How much did he say, Elliot? That fellow does more business than all the sextons of Nearford put together."

"Because he is favoured by accidental circumstances," interrupted Davis, who was somewhat older than the rest of the pupils, and

(though it is not of the slightest consequence to mention it, as it has nothing to do with the story) was a son of Mr. Davis, of Seaford. "St. Luke's is a populous parish. I have seen on a Sunday as many as six funerals there; and the churchyard is snug and quiet, free from overlookers on a moonlight night. What did he ask you, Elliot? He'd clap it on to you, being a fresh one."

"No; I told him I was here. A young one, from one guinea to three; a full-grown, from seven to ten."

"Did you strike a bargain? Who's that at my sandwiches? Hand 'em over here."

"No, I didn't," said Elliot. "The fact is, I don't know how on earth to get it smuggled in, or where to hide it when it is in. If the old lady, or those two female slaveys came upon it in my bed-room some odd day—whew! they'd screech out blue murder. I should lose my quarters too."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Elliot, if you like," cried a very young student, eagerly, Mr. Dobbs. "I'll go halves with you for a three-guinea one, and we can put it at my place, and you can come there and exercise. My landlady won't care, if I give her a pint of gin at the bringing-in."

"I'll see about it," answered Elliot. "Give us the pewter again."

"How Elliot dips into the beer to-day! One has no chance, drinking with him."

"Send for some more," was that gentleman's rejoinder. "This is dry work."

"Much work you are doing!"

"Well, you are at it, Jones, so don't growl. I am more agreeably occupied; recalling those lovely visions of last night."

"I say," cried Davis, "who were those girls Elliot's raving about!"

"Who's to know? There were fifty girls in the room. Very likely they were the Thompsons."

"Annihilate the Thompsons!" interrupted Elliot. "The one's cross-eyed, and the other's sickly. D'ye think I don't know the Thompson girls? These were strangers. At least, I have never seen their faces at lectures before."

"Whereabouts did your two beauties sit?"

"About half way up the room, on the left-hand side," responded Tom. "Close underneath the astronomical map."

"I know," shouted Dobbs. "They had got a big fat duenna between them, hadn't they?"

"Just so, little Dobbs. In a scarlet hat."

"A scarlet hat!" echoed Davis.

"Or a turban," added Elliot: "might be meant for one or the other. A glaring red cone, three feet high."

"Over a flaxen wig, which she puts in papers, and makes believe it's her own hair," rejoined little Dobbs. "It's their aunt."

"You insignificant monkey—*their* aunt!" broke forth Elliot. "If

you don't tell the name without delay, I'll dissect you. You see I'm expiring under the suspense."

"I don't think much of the girls, myself," persisted the young gentleman, delighted to exercise Elliot's patience. "The dark-eyed one is the best, and that's Clara."

"Out of the way Jones—let me get at him. I'll Clara him, as he ——"

"Hallo, Elliot, don't take the arm with you!" interrupted Davis. "Dobbs, you young limb, if you cause this confusion again I'll turn you out. Keep still, Elliot, and I'll tell you. They were his cousins, the Blake girls, Clara and Georgy."

"That they were not," said Mr. Dobbs. "They were the two Freers."

"Oh, the Freers," echoed Davis; "They don't often show. Old Bag-wig keeps them up tight. They are the prettiest girls in Nearford."

"Who's old Bag-wig?" demanded Elliot.

"The Papa Freer. As cute a lawyer as any on the bench. He sports a wig with a bag behind; the only relic of bygone days to be seen in the town."

"I intend to monopolise one of those girls for myself," announced Elliot.

"Phew! wish you joy of your chance. Bagwig's laying by sacks of gold, and designs those two female inheritors of it to marry on the top of the ladder. Nothing under a foreign prince. You'd never get admitted inside their house, if you tried for a year."

"I tell you that girl's a prize, and shall be mine: and I'll bet you two crowns to one that I'm inside their house within a week. Tell me I can't get in where I choose! You can't, perhaps," added the audacious Elliot, drawing up his handsome figure in his vanity.

"Done!" cried Jones.

"And I'll take him too," echoed Davis. "Which of the two is the prize?"

"There's one with piercing dark eyes, giving out wicked glances," answered Elliot. "And splendid dark hair."

"Yes, that's Clara."

"And a Roman sort of nose, and rosy pink colour.

"That *is* Clara."

"Tall, fine shape, lovely fall in her shoulders," went on Elliot.

"Yes, yes, no mistaking Clara."

"Well then, it's not she."

"Now, Elliot, don't try on any gammon. It must be the young one then, and that's Loo."

"Loo, is it?" returned Tom Elliot. "The giantess in the scarlet top-knot, was that the Mamma Freer?"

"She's dead. Who was it, Dobbs?"

"Old Mother Stevens, the greatest guy in all the world. One day ——"

"Hark! hush! Listen, will you!" interrupted Davis. "There's Dicks's voice, as I'm alive."

The metamorphosis was like magic. Certain overcoats of the pupils', which lay in a heap in a corner of the room, were raised, and the pewter pots hidden under them; slops of beer, rather prevalent, were rubbed dry with handkerchiefs; cigars and pipes, all alight as they were, were thrust into side pockets; tables, as sitting places, were abandoned, and when Mr. Dicks, M.R.C.S., entered, every student presented the appearance of sober industry: some busy with the operating knives, some buried deep in surgical books of reference.

If fortune ever favoured any venturesome layer of bets, Tom Elliot was certainly the one that day. On his return home in the afternoon, he found Mrs. Agatha Needham cutting most extraordinary capers. She was evidently in a desperate state of excitement and anger. Tom's conscience took alarm. He believed something had come out about himself, and felt as if a cold bath had been dashed over him.

"Dear Aunt, whatever is the matter?" he ventured to ask, finding she did not speak, and thinking silence might look like self confession. "You are surely not taken with St. Vitus's dance in the legs?"

"Never was such a thing heard of! never was such a wicked act perpetrated! Rachel—my bonnet and velvet mantle. Thomas, nephew, don't stand peering at my legs. It's not in them, it's in my mind."

Mr. Thomas sat down, completely cowed. What on earth had come to light? The latch-key, or kissing Rachel, or smoking in his bed-room at night? or had that sexton ——"

"By all that's awful that must be it," reasoned Tom. "The bungling fool has mistaken me, and sent the thing home; and she and the girls have turned Bluebeard's wife, and opened the box." Tom's face began to stream down. Whatever could he do?

"Has a—a case—been brought here, ma'am: a heavy one?" he stammered. "I came home on purpose, because there has been a mistake. It belongs to Mr. Davis, senior student, and ought to have gone to his lodgings. I'll get a man, and have it moved directly."

"Mercy, boy!" cried Mrs. Agatha. "I don't know anything about cases. If they had brought a dozen here I should never have seen them to-day. There has been a wicked man here, Thomas; that's what there has been. A lawyer, I believe he calls himself, and —— That's right, Rachel; I'll go and consult mine now."

Tom's spirits went up amazingly. "Then *I* have not offended you, dear aunt? I feared—I don't know what I didn't fear—that somebody might have been trying to traduce my character to you."

"Child and woman have I lived in this house for sixt— over forty years," went on Mrs. Agatha, unheeding Mr. Tom's fears; "my own

leasehold property, and my father and mother's before me. And now an impious wretch comes forward and says there's a flaw in the lease, and I must turn out, and am responsible for back rent! I'll go and consult the first lawyer in the town. Come along with me, Thomas."

"It's impossible, dear aunt. I have six hours' work before me to-day: reading up for Mr. Dicks." The truth was, he had made an appointment for billiards.

"That's exceedingly vexatious. I should like to have had you with me for a witness. But you are quite right, Thomas: never put your studies aside for anything. I'll wish you good-afternoon. Rachel, if anyone comes, you don't know when I shall be at home, for I am gone to Lawyer Freer's."

"Lawyer Freer's!" screamed Tom, rushing after his aunt and nearly upsetting Rachel. "Of course you must have a witness, aunt, if you are going there. My reading can wait. Just stop while I slip on another coat and waistcoat."

"What is the matter with those you have on?" demanded Mrs. Agatha.

"Oh—this is my professional suit. And, when I walk with you, I like to look as your nephew ought."

"Dutiful lad!" aspirated Mrs. Agatha. "He shall not be a loser by his attachment to me."

Lawyer Freer was at home, and ensconced Mrs. Agatha in his consulting-room. Her dutiful nephew slipped aside as they were going in, and shut the door on the old lady and the attorney. Mrs. Agatha Needham was too full of her subject to notice, at first, the absence of her nephew; and afterwards she would not disturb the consideration of her case by calling for him. They both concluded Mr. Tom was exercising his patience in company of the clerks in the front office.

Not he. He was as daring as he was high; and he went along the passage, peeping here and peeping there, till he came to a room where two young ladies were seated—his beauties of the previous night. Clara, the eldest, a splendid girl; Louisa (the prize) prettier still, with dancing eyes and shining curls.

"I beg pardon," cried Tom, as the young ladies rose in surprise, "do not let me disturb you. I am sent here to wait, while my aunt holds a private consultation with Mr. Freer—Mrs. Agatha Needham."

The young ladies bowed. They had a speaking acquaintance with Mrs. Agatha, and hoped she was well. Tom assured them she was very well, and went on talking upon other subjects, and made himself entirely at home. Mr. Tom Elliot had won his bet.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT CAUSE, "NEWCOME *versus* NEEDHAM."

MRS. AGATHA NEEDHAM found her lease and its flaw could not be ettled by the lawyers. The cause, in due time, was entered for trial at the March Assizes, "Newcome *versus* Needham." It caused a great sensation in Nearford: all the holders of leasehold property arguing, that if Mrs. Agatha was disturbed in her long and peaceful occupancy, where was their security? As to Mrs. Agatha, it may be questioned if she enjoyed a full night's rest during the period of suspense. Nothing could exceed the sympathy and interest evinced by Tom Elliot in the affair: as Mrs. Agatha observed, what she should have done without him she did not know. His legs were kept on the run between his aunt's house and Lawyer Freer's; and the numerous messages forwarded by the old lady nearly drove the lawyer wild. *She* was fidgetty, and Thomas pressed her on.

"Do you want my services with Mr. Freer this morning, aunt?"

"No, Thomas, I think not this morning."

"You'd do well to send to him, if only the slightest message. No trouble to me. Those lawyers require perpetual looking up. They are so apt to forget the interests of one client in those of another. It's 'out of sight out of mind' with them."

"Very true, Thomas. Thank you. Go down then to Mr. Freer: my compliments, and I have sent to know if there's anything fresh. But I am ashamed to give you this frequent trouble."

"Trouble's a pleasure, aunt, when you are concerned," replied Thomas.

"The comfort of possessing such a nephew!" ejaculated Mrs. Agatha.

Tom flew off, but the stars were against him that day. Lawyer Freer was out; so much the better: for Tom could more safely find his way to the young ladies, as he had now done many and many a time. They had also taken to look for him, and they saw him coming down the street.

"Here's Mr. Elliot, Loo," observed Clara; and a blush of satisfaction rose to her face, and she turned from the window to a mirror and smoothed her hair here and there with her finger. Louisa did not answer, but a much brighter blush rose to *her* face, and she bent lower over the piece of drawing she was preparing for her master. For Louisa, scarcely eighteen, still had masters attending her, and Clara, who was two years older, looked upon her as a child. Child as she might be, though, she had grown to *love* Tom Elliot.

Why did they both blush, someone may ask; surely they were not both in love with him? Not exactly. Tom Elliot was a general admirer, and whilst he had become really attached to Louisa Freer, and had striven privately to gain her affections, he had evinced a very

fair share of admiration for Clara, partly in homage to her beauty, partly to divert suspicion from her sister. And Clara Freer, who had no objection in the world to receiving admiration from so handsome and popular a man as Tom Elliot, certainly did not repel him.

"He is over head and ears in love," Clara was proceeding to add; but her sister interrupted her in a startling voice.

"In love! With whom?"

"With me," complacently replied Miss Freer; "who else is there? His next move will be to make me an offer—in his random way."

Louisa's heart beat fast against her side, and her blood tingled to her fingers' ends. "Make *you* an offer!" she gasped forth. "Would you marry him?"

"Bless the child! I marry a medical student, an embryo surgeon! I look a little higher than that, Loo. But if Tom Elliot were as rich in wealth as he is in attractions—why then you might stand a speedy chance of being a bridesmaid. I know he adores me."

No more was said, for Tom entered and began rattling away after his own fashion. An attractive companion he undoubtedly was. Presently Miss Freer was called from the room by a servant, upon some domestic affair.

"My dearest Loo," he whispered, as soon as they were alone, "you look sad this morning. What is it?"

"Oh, nothing," she answered, bursting into tears. And Tom, all alive with surprise and concern, clasped her in his arms, and was in the very agreeable act of kissing off the tears, when Clara returned. It was sooner than they had expected her, and they were fairly caught.

Clara, her features naturally of a haughty cast, could put on *a look* when she liked. Mr. Elliot had never yet been favoured with it; but it shone out in full force as she demanded an explanation from both of them.

"The truth is, Miss Freer," said Tom, speaking up like a man, "that I love your sister. Until I saw her, all young ladies were alike to me—that is, I was fond of them all. But now she is the only one I care for, or ever shall care for in the world. I did not intend this to come out yet, and I hope you will keep our secret."

"And pray," returned Clara, boiling over with rage and mortification, "when *did* you intend it to come out, sir?"

"When? Not till I was well established in my profession, and could ask for her as I ought to do, of Mr. Freer."

"Clara," uttered the younger sister, her tears falling fast in agitation, for she had read the expression in the elder's eye, "for the love of heaven do not betray me to papa. Dear Clara!"

"I shall acquaint your father instantly, as is my duty," was the cold reply. "We shall have a baby in leading-strings entangling itself in a matrimonial engagement next."

"Clara, my dear sister—let me call you so for the first, though I

hope not for the last time, be reasonable, be kind," said Mr. Elliot, trying *his* powers of persuasion. But, effectual as they had hitherto proved with the young lady, they failed now.

"What I can do to oppose your views on my sister, I will do," she vehemently answered. "You have played a traitor's part, Mr. Elliot, in seeking her affections. I beg you to leave the house at once, and you will never be admitted to it again."

"But, Clara," he remonstrated, "you——"

"I have told you to leave the house," she reiterated, pale with anger. "If you do not quit it this instant, I shall ring for the servants to show you out."

"Very well, Miss Freer," he said, all his customary equanimity returning to him. "Louisa, my darling," he impressively added, turning to her for a last farewell, "we may be obliged to bend to circumstances, and temporarily separate; but remember—come what may, I will be true to you. Be you so to me. Will you promise?"

"I will," she whispered, and Mr. Tom Elliot bent down, and sealed it on her lips, regardless of Miss Clara's energetic appeal to the bell.

Clara Freer made her own tale good to her father, and Thomas made his good to Mrs. Agatha. For, in the violent indignation of the attorney, he had informed that lady of her nephew's having presumed to make love to his daughter, and Mrs. Agatha, overwhelmed with the first shock of the news, wrote off an imperative summons to Tom's father, telling him to post to Nearford upon a matter of life and death, which summons brought the alarmed parent flying at express speed.

Everybody who heard of the affair pronounced them both a couple of simpletons. A medical pupil, of twenty-one, without any definite hopes or money whatever, to have talked of marriage, was ridiculous; and for a young lady, *with* money and prospects, to have listened to him, was more ridiculous still. The clergyman, when he arrived and found what the matter was, wished to treat it as a joke; the lawyer was too outrageous to treat it in any way but in earnest; while Tom strove to deny it to Mrs. Agatha.

"There's nothing in it, dear aunt," he pleaded. "Don't you believe any of them."

"But Miss Freer affirms that she caught you kissing her sister," persisted Mrs. Agatha. "How do you account for that?"

"I'm sure I don't know how it is to be accounted for," answered Tom, demurely. "I believe I must have dropped asleep with my eyes open, and done it in a dream. I was sitting there, waiting for the lawyer to come in, and had got tired to death."

Mrs. Agatha was staggered. She had not much faith in those sort of dreams, but she had great faith in Tom's word.

"Kissing is very bad, Thomas," she observed, doubtingly.

"It's shocking," promptly answered Thomas. "You cannot believe, ma'am, I should be guilty of it—awake. Never tried to kiss any young lady in my life, except my sisters; never wanted to."

Not, however, to his father and Mr. Freer did Thomas Elliot make a similar defence. To them he told the truth boldly—that he was in love with the young lady, and meant to marry her if she would wait for him.

His impudence struck Lawyer Freer speechless. "Sir," he stuttered to the parson, when his tongue came to him, "I insist upon it that you find means to stop this presumption of your son's. You are a clergyman, sir, and must feel that it is a disgrace to him, to my family, and to the age we live in."

"I'll talk to him," responded Mr. Elliot, meekly. "I am sure he will hear reason."

So he took his graceless son all alone into the bedroom of the hotel where he had put up, and did "talk" to him. But Tom remained as hard as a flint, protesting that no father had a right to control his son in the choice of a wife.

"You will find they have," angrily repeated Mr. Elliot, provoked to warmth. "I forbid you—do you hear me—I *forbid* you to think any more of this."

"I shall be sure to marry her in the end—if it's twenty years to come," persisted Tom. "I have told her so."

"At your peril," uttered Mr. Elliot; "at the peril of disobedience. And deliberate disobedience to a father never goes unpunished, remember."

"I'll risk the punishment if ever I get the luck," dutifully concluded Mr. Tom to himself.

The Reverend Mr. Elliot returned to his home, and matters went on quietly for a week or two. Tom finding no opportunity of seeing Louisa, except on Sundays, when he went to St. Luke's, which was Mr. Freer's parish church, and enshrined himself in a pew within view of the lawyer's; always telling Mrs. Agatha, who expected him to go to church with her, that there was an unusual press of in-door patients at the infirmary.

Meanwhile the affair was talked of abroad, and a country squire, who was intimate with the attorney's family and very much admired Louisa, came forward when he heard of it and made her an offer, fearing he might lose her. All the blame, be it observed, was laid by everyone upon Tom Elliot; Louisa got none. The proposal was complacently received by Lawyer Freer, for it was a first-rate match for his daughter. He, like others, had not cast much reproach to Louisa, his indignation being concentred on the audacious infirmary pupil; and now that the intimacy between the two was broken off, the lawyer concluded the affair was at an end, and so dismissed it from his mind.

"If I could have chosen from all the county for you, Louisa, I

should have fixed on Turnbull," observed the lawyer to his daughters. "What do you say, Clara?"

Clara said nothing: she was sulky and cross. She considered herself much handsomer than that chit, Louisa, yet all the offers were going to her.

"His rent-roll is two thousand a-year, all clear and unencumbered," continued Mr. Freer. "I had the settlement of affairs, last year, at his father's death. You are a lucky child."

"I should not like to live in the country," timidly remarked Louisa, not daring to make any more formidable objection.

"Not like—what! raise an objection to Turnbull Park? There's not a prettier spot, for its size, in the county!" cried the attorney. "I wish *I* had the chance of living there."

"If Mr. Thomas Elliot were its owner, we might hear less of objection to 'living in the country,'" very spitefully exclaimed Miss Freer.

"Thomas Elliot!" repeated the lawyer; "hang Thomas Elliot!" He looked inquiringly from one to the other: Clara's face was pale and severe; Louisa's burning. "Hark ye, young ladies," he said, "we will dispense with the naming of that person in future. Had Louisa not given him up, I would have discarded her in disgrace. I would, on my solemn word. Squire Turnbull dines here to-morrow, Clara. Let the dinner be handsome."

Once more were the pupils assembled in a private department of the infirmary. Not the dissecting-room, this time, but in the mortuary; and they were looking at—well, no matter what: something which had been in one of the wards the previous evening. Their pots of beer were absent, but their careless jokes were not.

"Elliot's late this morning," observed Jones. "Won't we have a shy at him when he comes!"

"I wonder if he knows it?"

"Not yet," answered little Dobbs. "I'll bet a shilling to a crown he doesn't. It was only through my aunt Blake drinking tea last night with Guy Stevens and her turban that it came out."

"Which is gone?" interrupted Elliot, coming in with a cigar between his lips, and bustling forward to look at what was before them. "Oh, it's that one. Well, we shall know now what was really the matter with him. Poor fellow! he was a fine chap."

"I say, there's a chance of getting him."

"Is there?" returned Elliot. "What are the mother and cousins?"

"It is believed he has none. None have turned up, as yet."

"Which will be prime," added little Dobbs. "Heard the news, Elliot?"

"I have heard no news."

"About a friend of yours," Davis interposed; "going to be married."

Mr. Elliot puffed on apathetically, and made no reply.

"I say, Elliot," began Jones again, "do you know Turnbull?"

"I don't know any Turnbull," responded Tom, who, as little Dobbs phrased it, seemed "cranky" that morning.

"Turnbull, of Turnbull Park. Drives iron-grey horses in his drag."

"Oh, that lot! A short, stout cove; looks a candidate for apoplexy. Splendid cattle they are."

"He's going into the matrimonial noose, Elliot."

"He may go into another noose if he likes. Who called him a friend of mine?"

"No, the lady's your friend. A clipper she is, too."

"Only Elliot does not think so. Oh no, not at all," cried Mr. Dobbs.

"Come, Elliot," Davis said, "guess who Turnbull's going to marry."

"You, perhaps," was the sulky answer.

"I'll bet he *has* heard it," grinned Davis; "he's so savage. It's your prize, little Loo Freer."

"What?" shrieked Elliot.

"Squire Turnbull marries Louisa Freer. Settlements are being drawn up, and wedding-dresses made."

"A lie!" shouted Elliot.

"It's not," interrupted Jones; "it's true. Dobbs' family have had the official announcement, and ——"

They were interrupted by a low, peculiar whistle from Davis. It was understood. The surgeons were coming downstairs, and the pupils lapsed into silence and good behaviour.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REVEREND SIMON WHISTLER.

Now it is not possible to defend Tom Elliot or Louisa Freer. Cast all the reproach you please at them, reader, for they well deserved it. They took alarm at the advances of Squire Turnbull, and planned a run-away marriage: though how they contrived to meet and consult was a matter of wonder afterwards to Nearford. It probably appeared to both as the only certain way of extricating Louisa; but a more lamentably imprudent step was never taken.

Prudence, however, was no concern of Tom Elliot's; all he cared for was to get it accomplished, and he went to work in a daring and unusual way. He determined to marry her in her own parish church, and he ran up to London by the night mail, procured a license, and brought a confidential friend down with him, who entered with gusto into the secret and enjoyed the fun.

The incumbent of St. Luke's, the Reverend Simon Whistler, a bachelor, and still a young man, was not altogether fitted for a parson. Such as he were not uncommon, though, in those days.

He was given to following the hounds more than to following his parishioners, was fond of gentlemen's after-dinner society, but painfully awkward and nervous in the presence of ladies. Good-natured, unsuspicious, he was the very man to be imposed upon by Tom Elliot.

Nearford assizes came on. And late on the evening of the first day, Monday, a confidential note from Lawyer Freer was delivered to the Reverend Simon Whistler, calling upon him to perform the marriage ceremony between his youngest daughter and Mr. Thomas Elliot the following morning at ten. Mr. Freer added a request that the matter might be kept strictly private, for reasons of which he would himself inform him when they met the following day. Now, if the Reverend Simon had an objection to perform one part of his clerical duty, it was that of tying the nuptial knot. Baptisms he did not mind, burials he was quite at home in, but a gay wedding was his aversion, for the ladies and their fine clothes scared all his nerves and set them shaking. So he groaned aloud when he read the lawyer's letter, but was forced to resign himself to what there was no help for.

On Tuesday morning, at twenty-five minutes past nine precisely, Lawyer Freer bustled into the town-hall, in the wake of two counsellors, specially retained for Mrs. Agatha Needham. That lady herself, escorted by her nephew, and accompanied by several maiden friends, also arrived, just as the learned baron who presided at Nisi Prius took his seat. With difficulty places were found for Mrs. Needham's party, for the Court was crammed, all the town being anxious to hear the great cause tried.

"And now, aunt, as you are comfortably fixed, I'll be off to the infirmary for an hour. It's my day to go round the wards with the surgeons."

"Why, Thomas?" uttered the startled Mrs. Agatha, "you'll never think of leaving us unprotected! Mr. Dicks will excuse you on so important an occasion as this. Those gentlemen in wigs are staring here very unpleasantly already. How extremely ugly they are."

"Staring, are they," cried Tom. "I'll go and stop that. Just one moment, aunt; you'll take no harm. Back in a brace of shakes."

At ten o'clock the Reverend Mr. Whistler was in St. Luke's vestry, putting on his surplice. He had not to wait long for the wedding party. It consisted only of Mr. Elliot, Louisa Freer (in her every-day clothes and a thick black veil), and a strange gentleman as groomsman.

"This is sadly unfortunate, Mr. Whistler," began Tom, in his off-hand manner, "my aunt's cause is on, and everybody's at it. Mrs. Agatha is in Court, Miss Freer, and other witnesses. Mr. Freer never would have fixed the wedding for to-day had he thought the cause would come on before to-morrow. Of course he is obliged to

be there, and excessively annoyed he is. He charged me with his compliments to you, and trusted his absence would make no essential difference."

A fair speech, and the parson bowed, inwardly blessing the great cause, "Newcome *v.* Needham." He had anticipated a string of ladies as long as the aisle, and a proportionate show of fans and feathers. He never performed the marriage service so glibly in his life—and he thought he had never seen a bride tremble more violently.

The fees were paid, the register signed, and the parties left the church. At the entrance, which was situated, like the church, in a low, obscure neighbourhood, stood a post-chaise-and-four. Mr Tom Elliot, clearing a way through the collection of young nurses and infants there assembled, placed his bride in it, followed her in banged-to the door, and off dashed the post-boys at a gallop.

"Never accomplished a feat more cleverly in my life," chuckled Tom. "Loo, my darling, all the fathers in Christendom sha'n't separate us now."

The groomsman, meanwhile, after watching the chaise fairly away, returned to the vestry, and addressed the clergyman :

"Mr. Freer's compliments, sir, and he begs you will be at his house at seven to-night to celebrate the wedding."

Mr. Whistler replied in the affirmative, though not without hesitation. He had a horror of evening parties, and concluded this was nothing less than a dance. But he did not like to refuse on such an occasion, lest he should give offence; and Lawyer Freer's Easter offering was always a plumper.

It was seven that evening when Mr. Freer returned home, having snatched a hasty dinner off a pocket sandwich in the Guildhall. Clara had tea ready on the table with a nice ham, for she knew what her father's dinners were on assize days.

"Well, papa," she said, "is it over? How's the verdict?"

"For Miss Needham, of course," replied Lawyer Freer, throwing aside his wig and bag, for when fatigued he was addicted to sitting, in private life, in his bald head. "I knew we should have it. There was a clapping of hands in Court when it was delivered. Just get me my slippers, Clara. Where's your sister?"

"She went out after breakfast, telling Nancy she was going to Court with Mrs. Stevens, and might not be home till late."

"Told Nancy she was going to Court!" uttered the amazed lawyer, pausing in the act of pulling off his boots. "*My* daughter to appear in a public Assize Court! If Squire Turnbull should hear —Good heavens, Louisa must be out of her mind. And where were my eyes that I did not see her? Ring the bell, Clara."

"I thought it very extraordinary, papa," rejoined Clara, not sorry to get her sister into a row.

"Nancy," cried the lawyer, in a fume, when the housemaid

appeared, "go instantly to Mrs. Stevens, ask to speak to Miss Louisa, and tell her it is my desire that she return home with you immediately. Stay—call at Ford's and take a fly, go in it, and return in it. A pretty night assize night is for women to be in the streets," muttered the discomfited lawyer.

No sooner had Nancy departed than there came a rat-tat-tat to the street door, and in walked the Reverend Mr. Whistler, ushered in by the cook, who, to her own mortification, happened that day, of all days in the year, not to have "cleaned" herself. The lawyer stared, and Clara stared, for the parson had arrayed himself in evening attire, white kid gloves, silk stockings, pumps and tights. Tights in every sense of the word. They had long lain by, unused, and the parson, upon getting them out, found he had grown stouter. He went all over as red as his hunting-coat, and sat down dreadfully embarrassed, feeling convinced he had mistaken the night, and ready to swear—if he had not been a parson—at his own stupidity. Clara asked if he would take a cup of tea, and he stammered that he would, though he hated tea like poison.

"You must allow me to congratulate you, sir," he began, believing he was expected to say something about the wedding, and clearing his throat to help overcome his diffidence. "I was sorry not to have had that pleasure this morning."

Lawyer Freer knew of no cause for congratulation, save the verdict in favour of Mrs. Agatha Needham. "Thank you," he said; "it is not a pleasant thing to lose a cause."

The parson expected his host to say daughter, and if the word sounded to his ear like cause, he attributed it to his own bewilder ment.

"Indeed it is not," answered the parson. "I remember when my sister was married, my mother and the bridesmaids cried all day."

The attorney looked up with undisguised astonishment, and Miss Freer certainly was laughing. He felt sure it was at those wretched tights, and pushed his legs back under his chair as far as he could without overbalancing himself.

"Were you amused in Court to-day?" was his next question, addressing Miss Freer.

"In Court! I?" cried Clara.

"It was her sister who went," broke in the lawyer, "my youngest daughter. Clara would not have acted so indiscreetly. Louisa's not come home yet."

"Your youngest daughter went to the hall to-day!" echoed the clergyman, staring in his turn. "That is rather—rather uncommon —is it not?"

"Uncommon? It's unpardonable."

"And Mr. Elliot. Was he there, too?"

"Mr. Elliot!" roared the attorney, firing at the name. "I don't know anything about Mr. Elliot. What's Mr. Elliot to me?"

"A—a—a—no quarrel, or misunderstanding, I hope, since the morning?" cried the parson, hopelessly mystified.

"Not that I am aware of, sir," coldly answered the offended attorney.

"I supposed they were leaving the town to-day," returned Mr. Whistler. "Indeed, I believed they had left it."

Mr. Freer considered, and came to the conclusion that the "they" must have reference to the learned judges. "What, leave before the assizes are over!" he echoed. "That would be a new move."

"Oh, I comprehend; they are going to remain for the assizes?"

"Why, what should take them away before?" demanded the attorney, pushing back his chair a few inches, and beginning to think his guest a candidate for Bedlam. "Would you have the business finished by a sergeant?"

The parson coughed, wondering whether the sedate lawyer was joking, or what on earth he meant, and altogether completely at sea. At that same moment, the cook entered: "Mrs. Agatha Needham's compliments; she was exceedingly sorry to trouble Mr. Freer, but had he seen anything of her nephew? Nobody had heard of him since the morning; Mr. Dicks had sent after him a dozen times, and Mrs. Agatha feared he was being led astray by some of those people in wigs, who were crowding the town."

"I know nothing of him," growled the lawyer; "*nothing*. My respects to Mrs. Needham herself."

Before the cook could turn away with the message, a fly was heard to stop at the door, and in came Nancy. "Mrs. Stevens's kind regards to Mr. and Miss Freer: she had been at home all day, but Miss Louisa had not called." The lawyer was seriously disturbed now.

"You may rely upon it, sir," interposed the clergyman, "that there is some mistake, and they are gone."

"Gone, who gone? gone where?" said Mr. Freer, in agitation. "Nancy, run in to Mrs. Blake's, and see if she is there."

"But, sir," persisted the Vicar, "you may be sure they have left the town. I cannot say that I saw the carriage drive off with them, but I certainly heard it."

"Good angels help him!" ejaculated Mr. Freer, "he'll want a strait-waistcoat before the night is out. What the dickens have the judges to do with Louisa?"

"The judges!" echoed the parson, aghast. "I beg pardon—I was not speaking or thinking of the judges. I mean that your daughter has left with Mr. Tom Elliot. There's no doubt of it."

"Were your mind in a sane state, sir, you should be made to account for your vile insinuation," cried the man of law, in his sharpest tones. "How dare you couple my daughter's name with a parcel of shameless reprobates? Tom Elliot indeed!"

"Well, this beats bull-baiting," uttered the amazed parson. "I

think if anybody's mad it's yourself, sir. I have not insinuated a breath against your daughter, or thought of her in connection with reprobates. But what more natural than that she should leave the town with her husband?"

"And pray, sir," said Mr. Freer, with forced calmness, thinking it might be better to humour his Vicar till he had procured assistance, "as you say my daughter has a husband, perhaps you will inform me when she was married, and who married her?"

"Why, *I* married her, sir; married her this morning to Mr. Tom Elliot. Married them at your own request, sir."

Lawyer Freer, who had risen, sank back in his chair and broke out into a white heat.

"What do you suppose, sir, brought me here to-night but your own invitation to celebrate the wedding? Brought me in these kickshaw things," added the unhappy parson, pushing out his feet and exhibiting the tights and pumps.

"Oh, papa," screamed Clara, "I see it all! Tom Elliot and Louisa are married."

"Married, Miss Freer; what should hinder them? Here's your papa's note—'Mr. Freer presents his compliments,' and so on—requesting me to perform the ceremony at ten this morning, which I did," said Mr. Whistler, thrusting his hands into his pockets for the note. Alas! he was in momentary oblivion of having sported the uncomfortable tights: the note was in the pantaloons he had left at home.

Clara Freer went off into strong hysterics, and the lawyer into an explosion of stronger expletives. The clergyman came in for his share of the latter. Mr. Freer insisting that he ought to have ascertained whether the note really came from him before marrying a child like Louisa to a graceless medical student.

"How could I suspect anything wrong?" asked the parson. "The handwriting was like a lawyer's, and, of course, I thought it was yours. I heard, some time ago, that Mr. Tom Elliot was paying his addresses to one of your daughters, so that when the note came it seemed but a natural sequence."

"And did you hear, pray, that Mr. Tom Elliot had been turned out of my house for it?" demanded the lawyer.

"I don't think I did: those sort of things are not in my way much. But if I had, I should only have concluded that the quarrel was made up again, when this request of yours came."

"Request of mine, sir! How dare you call it so? Don't I tell you it was a wicked forgery? and nobody but a fool would have been taken in by it. It will be the ruin of Louisa."

"I am very sorry," deprecated the Reverend Simon. "I would join in undoing the wedding if I could. Is it any use following them? I'll go in pursuit, for one, if you like, sir. My hunter's as fresh as a daisy to-night."

"Pursuit!" reiterated the irritated Lawyer Freer. "Eight o'clock at night, and ten hours' start! What use do you think pursuit would be now? And I would advise you, sir, as a lawyer, not to countenance these clandestine matches in future, or your bishop may stop your power to perform them, in a way you won't like."

"I wish he would," answered the browbeaten parson. "I wish he'd unlicense St. Luke's for marriages. I'd rather do fifty funerals, all in a day, than one wedding. I would indeed."

So Mr. Tom Elliot got clear off with his prize.

(To be continued.)

VERSES.

ARE your grave eyes graver growing?
Sweetheart, may I look,
At the mighty thoughts which move you
In the poet's book?
Stay not in the lazy shade,
With the drowsy roses,
Come into the woods and see
Where I find my posies.

Has the buried singer left us
Songs to make you weep?
Are you saddened by the sorrow
That his numbers keep?
Or were all the songs he gave us
Born in happy hours?
Come with me, he found his music
Where I find my flowers.

Where a little mossy pathway
Lies beside the stream,
Long ago the poet lingered;
Sun and pale star-beam
Touched his lips, while there he wandered,
Summer-time and spring,
And the mighty woods and river
Taught him how to sing.

CAROLINE RADFORD.

A RAMBLE ON COPPER.

WE do not suppose that many of the amateur public who call themselves "artistic," found their way last summer to Pall Mall East, in order to study the pictures of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers. Some indeed, believing they were going to see paintings, were disappointed when they entered the one room of the exhibition to see nothing but black and white, some of which were quite slight things, and some mere "scratches on paper!"

Even now the general public in England—among which public there are many who call themselves artistic—know hardly anything about the art of etching, what it is, in what it differs from an engraving, nor how the result is obtained. But now that we have a Royal Society with a President at its head; a President, too, who is one of the best living etchers; we may hope that a more intelligent interest and a more proper appreciation of this art may spring up; and if it does, we believe it will do much towards improving the work of those artists who yearly send up so many mindless pictures to our too numerous exhibitions.

It would indeed be a boon to the general public, if some of the original plates of the old master-etchers could have been exhibited in juxtaposition with the works of our living artists on copper: we should then have had an art lecture without need of words, and we believe that even the ignorant amateur would have been able to discern that many of what he calls "mere scratches on paper" are the outcome of genius.

Even with what was given us in this one room, containing not a hundred and fifty pictures, we could learn that no one can be a good etcher who has not thoroughly mastered the great principles which make the real artist.

Certainly much can be put on copper: an artist can ramble along many lines; he may exemplify on his one plate all the tricks of the art, if we may call them so; he may even have learnt tolerably accurate drawing, and yet his printed picture will give no pleasure, neither will it profit himself or others. Etching is nothing if it is not the direct impress of a thought: we must be able to stand before the work of the etcher and feel within ourselves that the idea it contains could not have been translated for us into any other artistic form. Among the pictures in this exhibition there were many examples about which we felt instinctively that the artist had better have saved his labour and tried to render his idea, if he knew what it was, in some other form; that oil or water-colour would have served his purpose better, as being more able to hide some kinds of poverty

of idea, and that a simple charcoal drawing would have taken up less of his time.

One test we can easily apply in studying etchings. Has the master idea been given here in its best way? If not, the exhibitor is not a painter-etcher and had better try some other mode of showing genius; for in all etchings there should be a spark from the sacred fire, or else the etching is worthless.

A ramble through a beautiful country may give us the highest form of enjoyment, but a ramble may also be a weary wandering through dull paths and we may return home more jaded than refreshed. So it is with a ramble on copper. We may stand before a simple etching where art and not craft is visible, and we shall feel that we are reading a master-mind; that *every line means something* and that that something was what the artist meant us to understand, and if we cannot fully understand it it is our fault and not his, and that we must look and look again till we do know his meaning, the meaning of what is noble and true.

The amateur need not despair if, in spite of loving the beautiful, everything is not at first plain to him. It does not follow that because the greatest is often the simplest it is also the easiest to understand. And there is yet another subject of consolation for him, and that is, that the first President of the Painter-Etchers is an amateur!

The word makes us smile when we consider the work he has done; nevertheless, it is true. In this exhibition the greater number of the etchings were by his hand (one or two of his best, however, were unfortunately absent), and the thought there represented was astonishing. Yet one of our greatest modern etchers has not spent his life in etching, nor in a studio, but he has been a successful physician. Genius, however, seems seldom anxious to live in a house specially prepared for it; it often knocks at unlikely doors, and is not to be commanded, but commands.

The President's pictures were by no means the largest or the most important-looking in the room, but a careful study soon enabled even amateurs, *i.e.*, those who possess the love of art and of beautiful ideas, to settle that only a few of the exhibitors were to be compared with him, and that those few had found it difficult to express *so much with so little* as Mr. Seymour Haden had done. Some—figuratively speaking—had clothed their statue to hide the lack of form beneath, and some had had so many ideas that they forgot to express one clearly. On the contrary, Mr. Seymour Haden in his work despises all superfluous lines which mean nothing; he knows that every recorded stroke must be the right one, and, besides having its own proper value, must suggest other lines to the spectator without their being visible.

Genius, as it were, takes us into its confidence. It does not say, "You are an idiot, and cannot combine for yourself;" but it says, "I shall put down what is requisite for you, in order that you may fill up all the minor details of my central idea yourself, and by doing this

I shall strengthen both my idea and yours; you will learn as much by what I leave out as by what I put in; you will share my pleasure, and thus we shall go hand in hand."

As we examine the President's landscapes and figures, the same truth is forced upon us. We see in all he does the strength, not the weakness, of art, and the power of "the lost and found." The drawing is always powerful, but it is not merely powerful and obtrusive—it does not exhibit itself because of itself, but because of its truth. For let us remember that there is plenty of good drawing in this world at present, and yet very little force derived from it. Is it because nobility of mind must go hand in hand with clever technique that we fail to see results? Let us quote again the words copied by Mr. Seymour Haden in his pamphlet, "About Etching," written in 1878:—

"Je crois que le vrai sentiment artistique n'est donné qu'aux natures élevées; que l'esprit vulgaire ne saurait produire le beau de même que l'esprit déloyal ne saurait trouver la vérité."

Many of the etchings exhibited in this exhibition by the President are still to be bought, and no doubt collectors have already secured most of his works, so that those who could not visit the gallery will see for themselves, or already know, most of his etchings. Brought together, it was difficult to make a choice of favourites. Here is the "Water Meadow," full of quiet strength, and there "Coombe Bottom" the essence of loveliness.

The various "states" of the well-known "The Breaking-up of the Agamemnon," each deserve attentive study. One has been washed with sepia, to give another idea. Though we prefer the unwashed etching in all its vigour, which no washing can improve.

The calm water and the unruffled trees of "A Sunset in Ireland," and the exquisite and well-known Shere Mill Pond show us that quiet does not mean passive nonentity, and that more artistic strength is required to express true rest than to give an idea of raging storms.

The two etchings of "The Turkish Bath," with figures, exhibit Mr. Seymour Haden's mastery of the human form more than many a study of the nude which so-called artists give us to show us how well they are acquainted with the anatomy of the human body. The President's training as a physician here tells powerfully, and we feel sure that he must suffer acutely when he sees the ignorance of many artists on this point.

If you can get a copy of "Battersea Reach," look at the water in all its clearness, expressed by master strokes, and the simple lines in "Kilgaren Castle" will tell you everything you ought to know about it. Study what true broken and flickering lights are in "Kensington Gardens," and how a sunset can be described in glory lines in "Sunset on the Thames."

As to the country scenes they are too numerous to name separately, but we should never tire of "Old Wellesby House" and "The Moat House."

The "Three Sisters" are forest trees growing from a parent stem, and here let us notice how Mr. Seymour Haden never diminishes his central idea by elaborate finish of minor details, which finish spoils half the pictures painted in the nineteenth century.

The etching of "Harlech" shows us in company with many others the artist's perfect mastery of composition, a mastery which is most clearly seen perhaps in his views of shipping, such as, besides the larger and well-known etchings, "Yacht Tavern, Erith," and "Greenwich."

What artist would not wish to possess "A Village Ford?" The cow crossing the water is perfect in form and expression; there is not a line in the picture which could be changed, and note, if you can get a sight of it, how the bridge is not highly finished or black as many another etcher would have made it, and would thereby have weakened his central idea or spoilt his picture. Mr. Seymour Haden always bears in mind the survival of the fittest, and upon that he concentrates his genius.

All the country scenes have come straight from nature, and have not been composed in a London studio. In some quiet corner of England that very same "Cottage Window" is to be seen, and we should gaze at the original and see it as the artist has seen it, supposing we can educate our eyes to see aright.

"Grim Spain" is a beautiful etching, and we shall find plenty of humour in the plates of "The Dog and Monkey," and the "Complete Angler," whose whole figure is full of the ardour of the fisherman.

It was not easy to turn away from such etchings, and to give our attention to some of the works of the other painter-etchers, and in our present article it is impossible.

Our ramble must end. We have but desired to point out a few tests which may aid us, not in selecting what painter-etcher ought to be fashionable, but in helping on the true artistic life within us, which life must soar above all that fashion which so easily turns weak souls aside from the true path. Do not let our taste and feeling be bounded by the remark, "Have you seen so-and-so's picture? he is all the rage."

So the poor amateurs flock to the picture galleries, anxious and troubled about doing the right thing; or else utterly careless, not knowing how they are to know, and not daring to have their own opinion for fear it should not be the fashionable one; and, worse than all, not taking the trouble to think out why they are so much bewildered in their own minds.

Let them remember that all art is the same, but that every translation of art has its own vocabulary, and that this language cannot be interchanged.

All great thinkers' thoughts can be best expressed in the way in which they have chosen to give them to us, and in that way only; for genius chooses his methods by a true instinct which lesser minds

need not trouble themselves to find excuses for. A true etching cannot be translated by an oil-picture, and a perfect water-colour could never have been expressed as well in any other medium. Every picture must have a central idea, written, as it were, in words which alone suit that idea, for true balance in every part is true power.

Lastly, "whoever lives true life will love true love." So will our artists paint beautiful pictures if they cling to their true ideas, and learn to express them in singleness of heart, without any regard to the blighting influence of an ignorant public.

Let them remember that the first President of the Painter-Etchers was an amateur, who rose to his height of fame without the help of artistic critics, but through love of his art, and the true love of nature which created his art.

ESMÈ STUART.

LOVE AND SPRING.

ONE far-off day, when Time was young,
And Spring, a new-born fairy,
About the world her mantle flung
With many a sweet vagary,
The chiming of the lily bells,
Her dainty footsteps after,
The busy brook, where rippling dwells
Soft echo of her laughter,
Awoke young Love, who sleeping lay;
Then up the urchin started,
And vowed by all the buds of May
They'd never more be parted.
Her heart beneath its golden zone
Grew lighter than a feather;
If Love and Spring are fair alone,
What must they be together?
A power that earth to heaven uplifts—
Ah, wisely was it fated,
That two of Jove's divinest gifts
Should be for ever mated!

SYDNEY GREY.

CATERINA.

A Story of Mesmerism.

By Letitia McClintock.

I.

EVERYONE in Amsterdam knew the rich Heemskerks, whose splendid Brocade Fabriek occupied half the length of the High Street. The Turk, the Hindoo and the Spanish merchant were to be seen in earnest discourse with old Heemskerk in the doorway of the shop.

Amsterdam was the queen of the commercial world in the year 1598, but the paving of the town was defective, the streets being in many places ankle deep in mud; and the lighting was accomplished by means of lanterns swung from a chain crossing the streets at wide intervals.

Heemskerk was rich, but his brocades were no better than Van Burgh's fustians, or Sperling's damasks, or Standt's linens; and to Holland the buyers came from other lands for corn and timber, for granite, for spices—for products of distant climes which the hardy sailors of the young republic had brought home. The sons of the commonwealth were sailors even more than traders, yet it was a source of grief to Heemskerk that his only son chose to be a sailor instead of a merchant. Jacob was a stalwart man in the prime of life, who had been at sea ever since his youth, and had won distinctions in every quarter of the ocean. Now in his prime he was elected to the honour of exploring the Arctic seas in search of a passage to China and Cathay.

Amsterdam was fitting out two vessels for the trip, and Jacob Heemskerk, who firmly believed that a pathway existed by the north of Nova Zembla and across the pole to farthest Ind, was to be skipper and supercargo of one of them.

We shall see what the States-General thought of their Skipper; how he was esteemed in the city, and what his father and wife felt on the matter. While he was being entertained at supper by the Mayor and principal burghers of his native city, Mynheer Heemskerk, his father, dressed in a long cloth gown and velvet skull-cap, with his wrinkled hands crossed behind his back, was marching backwards and forwards in a salon over the Brocade Fabriek.

Near one of the tall, narrow windows sat his daughter-in-law, the Skipper's wife, using the waning daylight at her painting, for she was an artist. He paused near the easel, and growled out something about his son. "That fool, Jacob! That ass, Jacob!" A sigh from the stately, dark-haired woman, and an angry grunt from the old man, who set off again on his trudge to the bottom of the long room.

"That confounded idiot, Jacob! I have toiled and slaved in the counting-house all my days to lay up a competence for him, and he must needs risk life and fortune in sailing to Cathay by the Polar seas."

"Alas, my dear father!"

"He swears he is fond of thee, Caterina; but thou hast no influence with him as far as I can make out. Eh, eh? Answer me, Vrow Caterina!"

His daughter-in-law flushed vividly, but she made no reply.

"And thou canst waste thy time in painting when thou mightst be on thy knees praying the good-for-nothing fellow to stay at home and eat his meat in quietness, and not break his poor father's heart."

Caterina let her paint-brush fall this time, stung to the quick by the old man's reproaches. "And my heart, father?" she cried, her face aflame with passion in an instant. "Dost thou think nothing of my heart? Dost thou imagine that I have not prayed him to give up this mad voyage? Ay, I have implored till my voice was hoarse with pleading, my knees sore with kneeling, but in vain—all in vain! He loves me not. If I had brought him a child to put its little arms round his neck and hold him back, maybe——but I——I have no power over him. He loves me not." And she burst into distressing tears.

The old man, whose anger and grief were peevish, not passionate, stopped short in amazement at her outbreak.

"Hey-day," he muttered, raising both hands to his ears. "The people err who call thee cold and proud. Cold? Ay, so is a volcano. It wonders me that thou canst not sway that provoking husband of thine. But gently, vrow, gently. Be patient," forgetting that he had spent the last hour in trying to excite the storm he now deprecated.

Caterina did not heed him any longer. Rocking herself to and fro before her easel she sobbed, "He loves me not! He loves me not!"

"Who loves thee not, dearest? Not thy Jacob? Thou dost not speak of him?" said a deep voice behind her, and the old man saw his son enter the room in the fading daylight, and gather the weeping Caterina to his breast. "Ay, take my fool of a son to task now, madame daughter-in-law," he grumbled, raising the tapestry and shuffling out of the room.

Caterina was the child of an Italian artist, who had settled in Amsterdam many years previously, and attained to fame and fortune. His talent had descended to his daughter, who painted pictures that were eagerly bought by the rich burghers of the city. Artists of native birth painted realistic scenes well enough—scenes representing their shops and houses, their canals, windmills and poplars—but Heemskerk's Italian wife painted landscapes bathed in the sunshine of southern climes, and subjects instinct with sombre or delicate fancy. To live by means of art had been her desire—a desire so strong that the gallant sailor had had some difficulty in inducing her

to be his wife. Vrow Sperling, of the Damask factory, mother of three blooming daughters, turned up her nose at the outlandish bride whom Jacob chose; but her husband and sons thought he had been fortunate.

The Heemskerks were so wealthy that there was no need for Caterina to sell her pictures, but she continued to execute orders industriously, and the father and son became accustomed to her mania. The old man easily reconciled himself to a craze that brought in money, and Jacob was glad his wife should have a pursuit that amused her during his long absences. He never tired of making her paint his ship, and she knew every rope, every sail in his new vessel, the *Orange*.

Her great picture, the Fireships bearing down upon the bridge of boats below Antwerp, hung over the heads of their mightinesses, the States-General, in the Raadzaal where they met to consult, reminding them of a noble struggle for fatherland. So Heemskerk's wife was quite a personage in Amsterdam and was a good deal respected and admired.

Jacob called her his "little" vrow, but she was a tall, imposing-looking woman, and now as she yielded to the clasp of his strong arms her head was on a level with his own. The old man was gone, but someone peeped at them from behind the arras, someone with a cruel, forbidding face—Mistress Truda the housekeeper, who had been sole ruler in the house before Caterina came. "Ay, ay, cry away, you Papist madam," she muttered. "Mynheer Jacob is going to leave you, and we'll see what your Saints can do to help you. Ay, sorceress, we'll see."

The look, the speech, was that of an enemy, and Caterina was unconscious that she had an enemy in the world, much less beneath her own roof.

She clung round her husband's neck, sobbing. "Do not leave me, Jacob, do not leave me, my darling! Stay with me if you love me. Ah, grant my request."

"I cannot, heart's treasure," replied the Skipper's deep tones. "I have my duty to perform. I must explore the Polar seas; I must find out a passage to Cathay."

"Must? Oh, Jacob," plained the silvery voice of his wife, "thou hast no need of pay. Thy father and I make money enough to keep thee in luxury at home."

"Tut, tut, love, wouldst make thy husband out an unworthy hound? No," more gently, "no, I do not go for hire. I go for honour—for fatherland; to win fame and wealth for Holland, not for myself."

"Ah, husband, I doubt thou art thinking a little of thyself too. Thy passion for adventure makes thee ever a rover."

"True, Caterina mia; true, my southern dove," replied the honest Dutchman. "I do love adventure—it is my life."

"What shall I do during thy absence?" asked Caterina, unclasping her arms and reseating herself before the easel. The tears of sudden passion were dried on her burning cheeks, and her usual stately quietude was returning. Jacob leaned over her chair, playing with the black ringlets falling down beneath her Medici head-dress, as he sought in his mind for an excuse that might satisfy her to let him go. They had been married a good while, and each year he had had the same struggle to undergo: Caterina endeavouring to detain him, his own love of adventure luring the rover with magnetic force to sail the ocean, north, south, east, west, in quest of new lands.

"These men see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep," quoted Jacob.

"But this will be the worst voyage of all: thou wilt venture among the eternal ice and snow—among the cruel Polar bears. The icebergs may close in upon thy ship, and thou wilt suffer the extremity of cold."

"Pish, Caterina; what evil auguries! Prophesy rather a return for the *Orange* in September, the passage discovered. And thy husband and his brave crew will receive the thanks of the commonwealth. Keep up thy heart till then. It is true the old man is but a peevish companion ——"

"He is thy father, my Jacob."

"And Truda is an ungentle and shrewish waiting-maid for thee ——"

"But I have the blonde Teresa at my beck and call ——"

Here the tapestry shook again, and the eavesdropper whispered angrily, "Ay, sorceress, thou hast the blonde Teresa at thy beck and call, but beware. Wait till thy Jacob has sailed to the Polar seas!"

"What is the spell thou employest, wife, to bring that girl to thy side?" asked the Skipper, gravely and uneasily. "I have heard it ascribed to magic. Be careful, I counsel thee, for the common herd, the warehousemen and shopmen and servants, distrust thee as it is. Thou knowest they have no love for thy faith, and if they begin to believe that thou meddlest with sorcery ——"

"Hush, my good man, thou art but a credulous big sailor," returned his wife smiling. "Do not malign thy fellow-citizens; they are not as feeble in intellect as thou wouldst have me think."

"My wife, I do not speak of our burghers. They respect the faith of others, having suffered too much for freedom of conscience to be persecutors in their turn. But the rabble are not so, and I warn thee against them—against the ignorant herd. I tell thee I trembled when I heard a whisper against thee."

So each had fears for the other—each had a warning to give—and in each case warnings and pleadings were in vain.

II.

Jan Troonk, Captain Heemskerk's loyal follower, was making his way to a house in the Haagstraat, running parallel with the enormous block of buildings called Heemskerk's Fabriek, but well to the rear of the warehouses. In that street lived Teresa, Jan's betrothed, the girl to whom Caterina had taken such a fancy. Jan was to sail next day in the *Orange* to the Polar seas, and he expected piteous upbraidings to be brought to bear upon him; but he was determined to withstand them, being as firmly resolved as his Captain to win fame and fortune. He paused in the low doorway, beneath the dense shadow of its overhanging eaves, to glance into the kitchen.

Vrow Steen was cooking, her ample face bathed in perspiration, for it was the 17th of May, and unusually warm for the season. She stirred her soup, and then turned, the spoon in her hand, to remonstrate with her daughter, who was knitting near the open door. "A fine lady, spoilt by her grand friend," she grumbled; "she sees me hot and weary, and never offers to relieve me. No, forsooth, not she! she sits there at her ease."

"Dear mother," replied Teresa languidly, "I did not see that thou wert cooking, and I did not feel the heat, for I was thinking of my poor Jan going to the Polar seas."

The vrow laughed harshly. "Thou didst not see—thou didst not feel! Jan is only thy excuse. Thou wert dreaming of thy popish sorceress, I'll be bound. Always mooning and neglecting thy work! Hussy!"

The lover in the doorway was on the point of entering, when a short stout man hurried past him. Hans Steen had heard his wife scolding, and hastened to protect Teresa with his presence. It was not that he approved of her moping ways, but he doted upon her, and could not bear to see her grieved.

"Gently, vrow, gently," he said. "Go on with thy soup making; I want my supper."

"Ay, ay, I am to slave while the girl may spend her time with madame, or idle as she pleases," and darting past him she dealt Teresa a blow on the cheek with her dripping spoon. In return she received an angry push from Hans' arm, which sent her spinning against the wall, and she sank on the floor in a sitting posture, gasping with heat and rage.

The dreamy Teresa, agitated for once, started to her feet, rubbing her cheek as she looked from father to mother. Jan Troonk hurried to her. "Too bad, mother," he said; "why art thou angry with my poor girl for her friendship with our noble Skipper's wife? The lady is a grand lady too, and I am well pleased she should befriend Teresa."

A torrent of abuse would have rewarded this speech if the father

had not been present; but Vrow Steen merely said, as she got up slowly from the floor: "Evil will come to Teresa through that Italian: she is not as she should be. Ask the old Mynheer's Truda, a prudent, religious woman, whose husband was burnt for the faith in the dark days that are gone ——"

"Hush, wife," thundered Hans. "We all had relatives martyred in those evil days; but that is no reason why we should turn persecutors; and our mistress offends no man—the little oratory in her bed-chamber ——"

"Fool, idiot of a man, thou hast learnt thy parrot song from the Captain. I'm not talking of the lady's popery, but of her sorcery. She is able to call our daughter to her side without speaking one word. It is useless for me to set her tasks. She is up and away, and the excuse is that she feels sure madame wants her. This much is certain, the Italian can draw her away from her duty, and keep her whole days in that bedroom, and what they do there heaven only knows. Truda says ——"

Teresa and her lover had withdrawn, and were whispering in the doorway. "And thou wilt be gone to-morrow? Cruel to leave me, and to brave the horrors of those icy seas!" said Teresa, laying her hands upon his shoulders.

"Ay, dear, I must go. Could I desert my noble Captain, and our good ship?"

"Thou lovest them more than me."

"Not so, darling. We'll be home again in autumn, and I'll take thee to our own house where none shall scold thee. I'll bring bear-skins home and fine wages, and thou shalt dress in brocades like madame if thou wilt."

"But thy perils! The white bears, the crashing icebergs—the bitter cold! Oh, do not go—I'll hide thee, and the *Orange* shall sail without thee."

"No, no!"

"What do madame or I care for good wages or brocades, or glory or fatherland ——?"

"Hush, love, hush! Is not our country dear to thee?" and he stopped her words with kisses. Meanwhile the parents were reconciled over their supper. The soup was excellent, so were the fish and "Zuyckes-Koicken," or sweet cake, the crowning dish of the repast; and Hans had a good appetite.

"Come, lest I eat all before me. Thou wilt not taste such a supper as this in the Polar seas, Jan, my boy. My vrow is unrivalled as a cook; not but that Teresa can do something in that way too; but she idles and dreams too much." He was often angry with his wife for scolding Teresa, but her words had weight nevertheless.

III.

It was the 23rd of September before Amsterdam began to be uneasy about the *Orange*. She ought to have returned by the 15th at latest, and, everywhere, anxious looks and words were exchanged about the good ship and her brave crew. The feeling grew stronger as October passed without bringing the mariners—without bringing tidings of them, for there was no post from the Polar seas. And as the weather became colder, and people enjoyed the warmth of their pleasant hearths, heads were shaken while they speculated upon the cold at Nova Zembla. Caterina and Teresa were companions in sorrow, each grieving over the hardships of her beloved.

The latter was quiet as usual, but tears fell while she washed dishes or made the soup. Van Rennen, father of the carpenter of the *Orange*, used to come to her to talk about his son and condole with her about Jan.

But towards the end of October, Vrow Steen began to dislike Van Rennen's visits, and to wish he would not exchange confidences with Teresa. A speech of Teresa's had caused this change in the hospitable woman's views. One night when Van Rennen had remarked that he feared it was cold weather on board the *Orange*, Teresa had replied that their friends had left the ship and were living in a hut on the ice. The surprise of the old man, his searching questions, Teresa's sudden silence and retreat to her room on the plea of illness, had thoroughly dismayed the mother. But Teresa did not answer her questions any more than Van Rennen's. She was more diligent at the house work than formerly; but it chanced one day that she was nowhere to be found on her mother's return from market, and the apple "koickens" were burning black in the oven.

Vrow Steen's outcry brought neighbours from either side hurrying in—Vrow Stimms, with a baby in her arms, and two stolid Dutchmen of tender years clinging to her skirts, and Vrow Van Rennen wiping soapsuds off her hands. There were voluble questions and explanations, and the three women were talking together in shrill tones, when Heemskerk's evil-looking servant appeared in the doorway, glancing furtively, as was her wont, into every corner of the dwelling. Truda's vile temper made her universally feared; and she was moreover respected because of her sufferings for the reformed faith in persecuting times.

"Welcome, Mistress Truda," said Vrow Steen. "Sit thee down and take a draught of Spanish wine. I would offer thee koicken but that my idle, disobedient wench ——— "

"Dost thou know where thy girl is now?" interrupted Truda.

The mother made a gesture imploring caution, either unseen or unheeded by Truda. She was filled with misgivings about Teresa's pursuits, which she dreaded being imparted to the neighbours. But the old woman went on without a pause.

"Teresa came slipping in by our back door like a thief an hour ago, and crept through my kitchen without speaking to me—*me* that was used to hear my master say, 'Good afternoon, Vrow Truda,' whenever he came in. She ran up to madame's room, and I heard the bolts drawn, and there they are shut up, hatching mischief. Dost thou wish her to be taught to pray to the Virgin, or worse?"

"What could be worse?" asked Vrow Van Rennen, full of curiosity.

"Eh, in the name of God, what could be worse?" cried the mother, trembling.

Truda ground her black and ragged teeth and clenched her skinny hand, but she did not answer aloud. Approaching her mouth to Vrow Steen's ear, she whispered a word that made her rubicund cheeks turn pale. "Come with me and see for yourself," she said.

The neighbours retreated to gossip and ponder over Truda's dark hints, while Vrow Steen followed the housekeeper down the passage leading to the back premises of the warehouse. Taking off their shoes in the kitchen they climbed an old, worm-eaten oak staircase that creaked at every step notwithstanding their precautions, and reached the tapestry chamber where we saw the Heemskerk family on the 17th of May. The easel was in the window, and the October sunshine streamed upon a remarkable picture. A ship was made fast by her bower anchor to a gigantic iceberg like a cathedral with spires and pinnacles—an enormous mass that towered far above the clumsy vessel, though the *Orange* was the best ship built in those days. Caterina's master touch had delineated a very dreary scene. A dazzling sunshine, which yet did not give the idea of warmth, was diffused over endless plains of ice. The women shivered involuntarily as they looked at it.

"Ugh!" cried Truda; "that water between the iceblocks is as black as the mouth of hell."

"She was thinking of our young master when she painted that; in truth, she's a good, fond wife," returned Vrow Steen.

"Thinking of him, eh? Was that all? Come on; thy Teresa is in her bedroom. Lift the arras. So! Caution!"

They were admitted to a dark passage off Caterina's chamber. "Now put thine eye to the keyhole and see for thyself."

Teresa lay on a couch opposite the door, her blue eyes wide open with an inscrutable expression as if she were gazing at some sight of distress and horror far away—beyond the arras—beyond the walls—beyond Amsterdam itself. Her lips were parted, her limbs stretched helpless. Above her stood the Italian, and her white hand was gently moving backwards and forwards. Vrow Steen recoiled from this sight muttering the word "magic," the word that had caused her to grow pale when the housekeeper first breathed it in her ear.

"Ay, magic. Thou hast seen for thyself," hissed Truda. "I'll bring that foreign woman to the dungeon or the stake. She said

I must keep my own place. She said I presumed. She said she was mistress."

"If you meddle with her you ruin my child. Have mercy, Truda," and tremblingly Vrow Steen followed the angry woman down to the basement story.

Caterina continued to make mesmeric passes over the face of Teresa. Several times already since anxiety began to consume her about her husband, she had summoned Teresa to her, and thrown her into a trance. In this manner she had seen the *Orange* hemmed in by ice floes, plunging and straining to shake herself free from her prison—now making a little way, then blocked up again, now rearing on end like a live creature, as the huge icebergs drove against her; again plunging into free water. Then she had painted the ghastly scene thus impressed on her mind, with the cold Arctic sunshine over all. It had been a kind of relief to her gnawing anxiety to portray the scenes that Teresa caused her to see. She could not speak of them to mortal; Art, the beloved, must be the confidante.

In her absorption she had not heard the creaking of the boards as the women crept to the keyhole, nor their whisperings and hard breathings. She was so bent upon catching every syllable uttered by her medium that she was deaf to other sounds. "Tell me," she said, letting her arms drop languidly by her side, "dost thou see the *Orange* now?"

Teresa sighed deeply, then spoke like one in a dream. "The ship is deserted: she lies sealed up in the ice; a large bear is on her deck."

"And he, my Jacob—dost thou see him?"

"Ay, he is there, and Jan too, and Van Rennen, the carpenter. I see them well. They have built a hut near the ship. The Skipper comes out at the door; he is dressed in white fur; he has a marling-spike in his hand. He beckons to Jan—my Jan—Oh——"

"What seest thou, Teresa? In God's name, what seest thou now?"

"Jan brings out a tub of salt meat, and lays it on the ice near their hut. A bear comes to smell it. The Skipper throws the pike at the bear; it leaves the meat to bound after the pike; it catches it in its mouth and plays with it like a dog. The other white bear clambers down from the ship and runs at our men. Jan throws another pike, and the bear bounds after it. They have no gun. Van Rennen drags the Skipper and Jan into the house and shuts the door. The bears overturn the meat."

"Where are the rest of the crew? Are the three men deserted?"

"I do not know—I cannot see them," replied Teresa, speaking faintly; "but it is cold—it freezes the marrow in their bones. The bleak sunshine cannot warm them—even the bear-skins have little heat—they suffer horribly—horribly——"

Her voice died away—her eyes closed and her limbs relaxed—a

deep slumber seemed to fall upon her. Caterina turned to the little altar with the crucifix, which was such an offence to her neighbours, and fell upon her knees, passing the beads of a rosary through her fingers. She had hitherto had little sense of religion, and had been Roman Catholic but in name, yet in this strait she felt the need of calling upon God, and she used the form of words she had learnt in childhood.

IV.

That evening Mynheer Heemskerk speculated as usual upon his son's whereabouts. "That idiot of ours—that ridiculous rover who scorns a good roof over him, and a warm bed to lie in—where is he now? Eh, daughter-in-law, what thinkest thou?"

Caterina was at his elbow, mixing his after-supper punch. She was all dutifulness to Jacob's querulous old father, and often spent an hour in gently rubbing his feet, tender from incipient gout.

"Our crack-brained sailor is perchance near home: we shall hear soon that his ship has been sighted in the Slie."

No answer from Caterina, whose graceful head bent lower over the brew.

"We'll welcome the rascal: we'll kill the fatted calf for him. Thou shalt wear thy new brocade, the claret-coloured, to do him honour—though how he could bring himself to leave such a wife beats me! What sayest thou? Will he return to-morrow?"

But his daughter, knowing so well that there could be no good news to-morrow, said little. She had prudence sufficient to keep her knowledge to herself—strange knowledge, strangely acquired.

Teresa, the medium, was not so reticent. She had other and weightier things to think of than her mother's sharp tongue, and she bore her scolding for the morning's escapade very meekly. She sat in the background brooding over Jan's hardships.

"Come near the fire, child, thou must freeze with cold over there," called her father. "Come and hear of the bales we sent off to the rich London merchant to-day."

"I am not as cold as Jan, stuck in the ice," she returned languidly.

"Jan, girl? I'll warrant he is on his way home."

"Ay," said Van Rennen, who had just come in—"we'll see your Jan and my Van very soon now. The mother is always expecting our boy to walk in."

"Tell her he cannot come."

"No? Why so, Teresa?"

"He is living on the ice, and cold, so cold—horribly cold—and those bears that were eating their meat—they looked so fierce—so hungry."

The neighbour started up and dragged Teresa unceremoniously out of her dark corner into the circle of light near the stove. "Now,

girl, speak, and tell me what thou knowest of my son. Speak," and he shook her roughly.

"Child, what ails thee?" asked her father. "Gently, neighbour, gently! Let my daughter go."

Vrow Steen, who had listened in a state of terror difficult to describe, thought only of hiding Teresa's guilt from all the world. "Let her alone, you men," she said; "see how wan she looks. She is sick—she raves. How, in God's name can *she* know more than *we?* Come to bed, child," and she led her from the room.

The mother's mind was ill at ease since Truda had made her look through Caterina's keyhole, and the hints about an icebound ship which Teresa had just dropped, added to Truda's dark whispers of magic and dealings with Satan, filled her with dismay. Magic? Frightful word! If such a crime were brought home to her child—and the sight she had seen in the Oratory that morning, added to the strange attraction Caterina certainly possessed for Teresa, made her sick with dread. The father must not know what she feared. If she were to breathe the word magic aloud, Teresa might be ruined. She knew how superstitious were the poor inhabitants of the Haagstraat—how their minds were dark and narrow like their street. Her own mind was as dark and narrow, for she did suspect the Italian lady of practising witchcraft, and she would let *her* perish without pity; but Teresa, her own child, must be saved.

Yet Teresa, she felt, was the person in danger. The daughter-in-law of a rich burgher might be safe, while a suspicion of magic meant danger to an humble peasant girl.

It was by the merest accident that Caterina had discovered the strange power that she possessed over Teresa. Struck by the fair girl's beauty, she begged her father to let her sit to her as a model, and Hans, much gratified at having his daughter noticed by his master's family, eagerly complied with her request. This happened six months before the voyage of the *Orange*, and the intimacy had very much progressed since then. Caterina's chief interest in Teresa arose from her power over her; but the poor girl adored the handsome, dark lady—the only lady with whom she had come in contact. She loved her for her kind manner, her gracious ways, so different from those of the women in the Haagstraat; and she liked to comb her long hair, and to pin on her Queen Elizabeth ruff while she talked of Jan, the chosen follower of Captain Heemskerk. Since the passionate Italian, wrongly called cold and proud by her Dutch acquaintances, had discovered that she could send Teresa's spirit upon a mission of investigation in the track of the *Orange*, while her fair form lay on the couch, she had existed in a state of suppressed excitement, and had had much difficulty in hiding her knowledge from her father and from Amsterdam in general.

Old Heemskerk was fond of dining with the burghers, and insisted that she should accompany him. Of course the conversation at

these civic feasts ran greatly upon the dangers and honours of Jacob and his gallant crew.

As winter advanced, the subject was felt to be a most painful one. The burghers pitied Caterina deeply. They thought it very likely that she was their brave townsman's widow, for how could the *Orange* bear the onset of the icebergs? how could the men exist in the region of eternal frost? Caterina found it very hard to hide from these kind, good men what she knew. Hardest of all was it for her when the Stadholder, Maurice of Nassau, on one occasion, took a seat by her side, and spoke of his hopes and fears for Jacob, saying she must feel glad and proud to be the wife of such a hero. "God grant he may return to you and to Holland, madame," he concluded, "but if not—if not—he will be one more of a glorious list of heroes who have laid down their lives for Fatherland."

And she could have replied: "I know my husband lives, but his ship is wedged firmly; she cannot move till spring." She could have said this, for she had that very morning again seen Jacob with Teresa's eyes.

"Strange woman, that foreign wife of Captain Heemskerk's," said Madame Sperling to the Mayor's lady. "With what an odd expression she listens to the Stadholder."

"Ah, my Jacob," murmured Caterina the night on which she had been honoured by Prince Maurice's marked attentions; "my Jacob, it was hard not to tell him what I knew. Only the knowledge of my danger kept me silent, for that brave man would have loved to hear that thou livest. Will Teresa obey my strict commands, and keep silence too? A secret is perilous when shared with another."

V.

It was eight o'clock on a stormy spring evening, and gusts swept up and down the dark, narrow Haagstraat, but did not sweep the inhabitants indoors. Some exciting topic kept them without, and many colloquies were taking place under the overhanging eaves of the curious old houses, where a lantern swung from a rope stretched across the stree at wide intervals. The Haagstraat was so narrow and dark, that one or two of the lanterns had already been lighted, though it was only eight o'clock of a spring evening.

The rain was blown in gusts, but the interest of the theme under discussion caused the people to forget weather. They were talking of the doings of the Brocade Fabriek, of Teresa's mysterious interviews with the Italian lady, of which Truda told them. The housekeeper had first hinted the matter darkly; then she had openly; and the incautious words dropped by the simple girl herself had completed the mischief.

This topic sufficed to draw the Van Rennens from their chimney

nook; Vrow Stimms from her sick child's bed; Vanessa from her flirting; Hansel from his drinking; all the neighbours to their doors.

"And if the girl knows what is happening to our men, how does she know it?" growled Van Rennen. "Not in any lawful or Christian manner, I'll be bound."

"No, mynheer, no; but by the help of Satan, the roaring lion that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. If the girl knows more than their mightinesses, the States-General, know about the *Orange*, she knows it by aid of the foul fiend."

"'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' Where are those words written? I ask ye that," croaked an ancient man, bent double over his staff, with palsied head covered with a rusty skull cap—a man who had spent years in prison in his youth, and had narrowly escaped the stake for his devotion to the book from which he had just quoted.

"You're right," croaked another ancient voice, and Truda, who had slipped out when she removed her master's dishes after dinner, crept noiselessly behind the speakers. "Ay, Father Stinsen, ay," and it was the voice of hatred that spoke, "thou art right. It is writ in Holy Scripture, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' But what witch? Not poor Teresa, our neighbours' child. No, she is but the victim. The real witch is at my master's side—the sorceress that robbed me of my place in that house, and told me she was mistress, and I nothing but a servant. Ay, she sits there smiling like an angel, but for all that, and for all the respect she gets from their mightinesses because she is Captain Heemskerk's wife, I know what I know—I see what I see," and she shook her head, and gnashed her broken teeth.

There chanced to be a crack in the glass of the lantern that swung overhead, and at that instant a sudden gust extinguished the light, and the frightened people were left in gloom. A yell of terror burst from the superstitious crowd, and they stumbled against each other in their anxiety to reach the shelter of their roofs. Not a soul in the Haagstraat but felt that the Enemy of Mankind was in their midst. Teresa's father had heard something of what was said, enough to fill him with terror, and he went home in a desperate state of mind, as usual disposed to vent his anger upon his wife.

"What's this, Babette, what's this?" he cried in a savage tone, alarm and rage mingled. "Why do they gossip about our girl? What has she been doing?"

"Doing, Hans? Nothing under the sun but idling her time with the young mistress," replied Vrow Steen, growing pale, and shrinking from his angry face which was poked close to hers.

"Fool! That's not what I mean. What has the child done to make people call her a witch?"

He dropped his voice at the dreadful word. The mother shuddered. She had succeeded in hiding her fears from him up to

this time, but she must now speak out. "Do they call her so? Ah, then, the obstinate minx has destroyed herself. Speak low, she is overhead ——"

"But explain, vrow. I will not be kept in the dark any longer. You women are so fond of mystery. Out with it at once."

"Well, then," faltered the poor woman, "our child has confessed to me that she takes a journey each time she visits the young mistress ——"

"What dost thou mean, idiot? Speak plain, in God's name."

"Be patient, Hans, or I can never tell thee. She says she goes to the ice plains where the *Orange* is hemmed in, and sees the Skipper and Jan, and is able to tell the mistress what they are doing."

"But that must be witchcraft, wife. I fear me old Truda has reason on her side. Thinkest thou our wench invents these stories?"

"And then," she proceeded without noticing his question, "madame goes to her easel and paints what Teresa had told her. Our child is distraught indeed. She raves of a white bear, larger than any common bear, that she says is standing at the door of their hut, and I fear neighbour Van Rennen heard her, for he ——"

The turmoil in the street began again. Voices were raised, and ominous words were heard. The parents grew silent, shuddering. Like a bird of evil omen Truda now appeared in the doorway. She shut the door carefully, and said in a hoarse whisper, "If you don't keep Teresa silent I shall not be able to save her. Keep her away from that sorceress yonder, and make her hold her tongue, or I cannot answer for her life."

"Shame," said Hans; "art thou exciting the rabble against thy mistress?"

Truda gave a malicious grin.

"I cannot keep Teresa away from her," said the mother. "She swears that she must go when madame wishes for her."

"It looks like magic," muttered the warehouseman. "Let me see those pictures that the girl tells of."

"Come along, then, both of you. Madame is safe in the dining-room, and her paintings are in the salon. She has no caution: she leaves them there to witness against her. Come." And she went before them through the passage leading to the basement story of Heemskerk's dwelling-house. She lighted a lamp in the kitchen, and, followed by two gaping servants as well as by the Steens, led the way to the salon. The long room looked gloomy enough to excuse the shiver that ran over the group as they raised the portière, and went in. The substantial furniture was covered with Utrecht velvet of a sombre hue; the figures on the tapestry told of battle, murder, and sudden death; but the shiver was not caused by these objects, but by superstitious dread. Against the wall beneath the four tall narrow windows were ranged the paintings that told the whole

history of the *Orange* as related by Teresa while away from Amsterdam on her mysterious journeys. First in the row was the picture already seen by Vrow Steen, namely, the ship anchored to an iceberg like a vast cathedral, with spires and pinnacles, steeple and tower.

Next came a grimmer canvas. The ship was closed in and deserted, and her crew were dragging timber to build a hut near her, their motions followed by bears the colour of the thickly-falling snow. A frightful misery was depicted in every face.

Again there was a picture of the completed hut. The crew were not visible, but their deadly enemies, the bears, swarmed around. A couple of them crouched on the deck of the deserted ship. Another lay upon the roof of the hut, while near the door an enormous bear stood erect like a ghastly sentinel. He had been killed and disembowelled and set frozen upon his legs, where he remained month after month with a mass of snow and ice accumulated upon him until he had grown into a fantastic and gigantic apparition, still wearing the semblance of the men's mortal foe. This painting was inexpressibly weird, and it excited terror in the quaking spectators; but the last in the row of pictures agitated them yet more. It represented the depth of an Arctic winter. The cold sunshine was gone, and only the moon gave light to a pale procession carrying a corpse to its last resting-place, a cleft in the ice. The features of the dead man were those of Van Rennen, the carpenter.

"Ach!" ejaculated Vrow Steen, "that, then, was what she meant when she said Van Rennen would come back no more!"

"But this is magic," faltered the horrified father: "if she were ten times my child, she should——"

"Hush, man, the chief fault is not hers, but the Italian's. She must suffer, but Teresa shall escape."

Vrow Steen cast a glance of terror at the housekeeper. Teresa's destiny might indeed lie in her hands. "See," she whispered, "there is the Skipper, and there behind him is Jan, but how changed they are, and how stiff their clothes seem with ice. They will soon be corpses themselves. See the foxes swarming after them. My faith, they look grizzly in the moonlight!"

"I never saw this picture before," said Truda; "madame kept her unholy work well hidden. This is the worst of all. Ah, the devil himself held the brush that time. Cursed Italian sorceress and papist, thou shalt frizzle for this!"

"Come away!" cried the terrified parents; "come away, lest we too have dealings with the foul fiend," and they tottered towards the portière, leaving Truda to gloat over the painting, and revel in her hopes of vengeance.

VI.

EARLY on the morning after Hans' visit to the picture gallery, the weeping Teresa was dragged down the ladder from her attic, and bundled into a covered waggon at the door. Hans' horror of her mysterious crime was such that he could not help being harsh. He had expedited her toilet with some hard blows, and he would not suffer her pitying mother to interfere to save her. He was going to take her to board with a cousin in the island of Shiermonigkoog, where she would be out of reach of Truda and her enraged neighbours of the Haagstraat.

"Let me see the lady once, only once, father," sobbed poor Teresa, as he sternly ordered her to climb into the waggon.

"No, minx, I say no! Thou hast seen her too often. Get in, get in!"

"Here," said the mother, "is breakfast for the child."

"Go back, Babette, we can breakfast on the road." He whipped the horse and they rattled off, the sobbing girl raising the covering of the waggon to look despairingly, not at her unhappy mother on the doorstep, but at the roof of the Brocade Fabriek rising above the low houses of the Haagstraat.

"Wilt thou at least let her know where I am gone?" asked Teresa, as they jolted out of Amsterdam.

"Whom dost thou mean, girl?"

"Madame Heemskerk, to be sure."

"No, then, I will not let her know. Stop that blubbering this instant."

"Alas, I shall then never know any more about my Jan, and she will learn no more about the Captain."

"Explain!" roared Hans in a fury.

"She cannot know anything without my help, nor I without hers That is all I can tell thee."

"Magic, wicked magic," groaned Hans. "Ah, she deserves to die, and die she will. I am not taking thee away a whit too soon."

"Die? Who would venture to touch my dear mistress? Father, what dost thou mean?" she asked, and quite beside herself, she struggled with the resolute old man in her effort to get out of the waggon. She would have rushed madly along the road in hopes of getting back to Amsterdam.

Two days later Van Rennen, who now haunted the Brocade Fabriek, sauntered out of Truda's kitchen, crossed the back yard of the factory, among a litter of enormous bales and boxes, and made his way by the passage into Vrow Steen's dwelling. He had given up all pretence of work and loitered away his whole time, now stopping a neighbour in the street to ask what hope he thought there was of the return of the *Orange;* now calling on the people for sympathy while

he poured forth his fears for his son. He was becoming leaner and more hollow-eyed each day. An, anxious, sorrowful expression had become so habitual to him that Vrow Steen, hearing his step in the passage, expected to see him enter with his eyes upon the ground. Instead of this he came in looking wildly excited. mingled rage and terror in his glare.

"Van Rennen, what ails thee?" cried the poor woman.

Van Rennen's look was threatening. "Tell me, hast thou seen that damned picture yonder—the picture in which the sorceress has painted my son as a corpse? Speak!"

She hesitated, stuttered, and turned pale.

"Speak out, woman! Tell the truth, or I'll ——'

"Come here, Hans!" she cried, escaping from him and running to the door.

Hans hurried in from the yard. "What's up now?" he asked, staring from his wife to Van Rennen.

"Matter enough," and the angry man repeated what he had just said. "I tell thee she has painted my son stiff and dead, and being carried to his burial. Hast thou seen the wicked picture?"

"Ay, neighbour, but, faith, Truda had little to do when she showed it to thee."

"Don't tell his poor mother," pleaded Babette.

"Who knows but that her magic may have killed my son?" continued the angry father. "She shall die—her death warrant is out already. Our Stadholder may be her friend, but even he shall not save her."

The Steens shrank back trembling, as they saw the glare of mad rage in his eyes. "Ay," he repeated, "she shall burn—she shall feel a foretaste of hell-fire. Truda and Stinsen and I have sworn it; but tell me," stopping short and staring at them, "where is Teresa? You have hidden her—say where she is."

There was no answer forthcoming; torture could not have extracted one.

"*Don't* tell me where Teresa is," said Truda that same evening, "for it is better I should not know." The parents thought this speech very ominous, and terror glued their lips together. When they saw Caterina roll along the streets in her handsome coach, dressed in brocade, looking calm and stately, they shuddered, feeling convinced that the sword of Damocles was hanging over her. She was much honoured by the burghers; the rich ladies came to call upon her, and once the greatest man in Holland, Prince Maurice himself, alighted at the Fabriek, come to condole with the gallant Heemskerk's supposed widow. When the Steens saw him arrive, they recollected that Van Rennen had said, "The Prince himself could not save her."

The day after his visit, Caterina glided through Truda's kitchen, and crossing the factory yard, made her way to Vrow Steen's cottage.

She bent her stately head beneath the low back door, and entered timidly, looking round the room in quest of someone.

"Tell me, vrow," she said, imploringly, laying her delicate hand on the woman's shoulder, "where is Teresa?"

Hans was at work in the warehouse and had seen her glide into his house, and scenting mischief, he followed her in time to hear her question, and to answer for his wife.

"We cannot tell your ladyship."

"Why not?" she murmured with pale lips. "Why must I not know what has become of my little friend?"

"Our child is not fitting friend for you.—Hush, woman!" as his wife tried to speak. "Teresa is safe out of your ladyship's reach."

Caterina coloured painfully. "Ah, good Hans, how can that be? I am lonely. Let me have your daughter as companion: I will pay her any wages you please to ask, for money is no object. I'll enrich you all—only tell me where she is."

"Better life than riches, lady: you are dangerous to our child."

"Ah, I know what the foolish, ignorant people say of me. They say I meddle with magic—have dealings with the Evil One. Never was anything more false."

"Nay, madame, you cannot hoodwink us. Teresa confessed that you are able to send her spirit on a journey after the *Orange* into the Polar seas—that she there saw the dead body of the carpenter. Did she speak truth?"

"Certainly; but I use no magic arts; I simply use the powers of nature, with which the good God has gifted me. There are hidden forces in nature, good Hans, and I discovered by accident that I could wield them—that I could influence your Teresa by my mesmeric power, and cause her to discover what we both longed to know. That is all."

"Enough, enough, madame. Give up these arts, for thou wilt not persuade Truda, or Van Rennen, that they are innocent."

"Oh, dear lady," cried Vrow Steen, "escape for your life while there is time."

"Hoot, hoot, wife, be silent," said Hans, nervously.

Caterina threw her scarf over her head, and turned haughtily away, saying coldly: "You speak of danger to *me:* what danger could possibly threaten Mynheer Heemskerk's daughter?"

"Truda," said Hans significantly.

"Truda!" repeated Caterina with ineffable scorn—"she is the dust beneath my feet."

"Not so fast, lady," muttered Hans, as her dignified tread died away in the distance.

Soon after this a great misfortune fell on Caterina; her father was seized with paralysis and lay helpless. She waited upon him devotedly, giving up her painting, her drives, everything to attend to him. She brought a leech from Rotterdam, a man of widespread fame, but

he gave no more hope than their own surgeon. The old merchant might linger for months, but would never be well again. Caterina had lost her protector. She felt deserted; and all devolved on her, from ordering the household to looking after the factory, and ledgers were oftener in her hands than pencils. Amid this load of business she was tortured by the longing to learn her husband's fate: she had not courage to search for another medium, and Teresa had vanished.

VII.

The first of November, 1597, was a day long remembered in Amsterdam. Those who mourned the ill-fated crew of the *Orange* were beginning to get over the agony of bereavement, and thinking of other matters. Mynheer Heemskerk had had a second stroke, and Caterina was more confined to his room than ever. There was sickness in other homes. Hans Steen was crushed by a falling bale and badly hurt, and now lay helpless as his master.

One of the servants came with news that stirred Caterina's heart; namely, that Vrow Steen had sent to summon Teresa home. She had no peace of mind after hearing this, and the desire to gain intelligence respecting Jacob consumed her. Whether in the factory with clerks and ledgers, with the frowning Truda in her store-room, or at the sick-bed, one anxiety was uppermost. Had Jacob made his escape from the deadly regions of eternal snow?

She must see Teresa; but extreme caution would be needed, for she now knew well that she had enemies.

Behold her, then, in the grey dawn of morning, stealing down the staircase unseen, for the servants were not astir; threading her way among the bales in the yard, and reaching Steen's doorway, where she stood shivering. The real peril of the adventure was here. Hans lay sick and could not pursue Teresa, but the neighbours might be alarmed, and they might be interrupted long ere she could learn where Jacob was. She was undecided what to do, when the door opened and Teresa almost fell into her arms. Instinct kept them silent. They took hands and hurried through the Haagstraat, not slackening their pace till they reached the gardens outside the city.

"Now we may take breath," said Caterina, still holding her companion's hand.

"Where are we going?" panted Teresa.

"To our summer-house; we shall be free from interruption there. Dost thou not want to know what has become of Jacob and Jan?"

"Want to know? The want to know has nearly killed me," cried Teresa, hoarsely; and Caterina turned to look at her. Her voice was changed, but so was her face. Years might have passed over her head since they parted, instead of only one summer. The soft beauty that had first attracted the artist was haggard and worn.

Heemskerk's garden lay a full mile beyond Amsterdam. There

was a summer house on the highest ground, and towards it the two seekers after forbidden knowledge, weary and breathless, but eager, bent their steps. They went in and bolted the door.

At that moment there was an unusual bustle in the Haagstraat. Truda's tottering steps were carrying her from one house to another, and Van Rennen, Stinsen, and several others were in her train, a grim and cruel resolution on their brows.

Hans lay groaning in bed, knowing that he was deserted in his pain, and knowing that mortal terror for their child had drawn his wife from his side. Truda had come in quest of Teresa, and not finding her, had gone off muttering. Vrow Steen, seeing her next in close colloquy with Van Rennen, had caught up her cloak and hurried after her.

A crowd now swarmed along the suburbs in the direction of the garden. It was swelled by the servants from the factory. Mynheer Heemskerk was deserted as well as Hans, but his mind was dulled by illness, so that he did not know what awful catastrophe was in the wind. Hans groaned and tossed, dreading the very worst. Just then a firm step ascended the stairs leading to the salon above the Brocade Fabriek, and one who had not entered a civilised dwelling for seventeen months stepped into the room.

"Caterina mia," he cried, tenderly, "where art thou?" He glanced around, and seeing no one, retreated to madame's chamber, and his agitated voice echoed through the deserted house.

"Caterina—Truda—Caterina!" perplexity and disappointment in his tone. He returned to the salon muttering: "I have been in every room except my father's eyrie under the slates, and not a soul to be seen!" Another rapid step came towards the salon, and Jan rushed in, crying, "Gone, my noble Captain! Teresa is gone!"

Heemskerk turned an anxious face upon him: "And I cannot find my wife, good Jan!"

"But I saw Hans, Captain. He is sick, and he told me that Teresa and madame went away this morning; he says they are in peril from the people, and that his wife has gone to the Mayoralty for help."

"But what peril? Peril to Caterina? Art thou mad?" He passed his fingers through his shaggy hair, turned to leave the room, then paused, and at that instant his eye fell upon the row of pictures standing against the wall below the windows, and he pointed to them, absolutely mute with amazement. Jan looked, and he too became mute, as he stared open-mouthed at the gaunt and enormous form of the dead bear, at the carpenter's funeral, then at each step in their past season of ghastly hardship.

"How did she know? This looks like magic. My Caterina, this will prove thy ruin," stammered Jacob.

Jan made no reply, but turning from the paintings, ran into the bed-chamber, the window of which looked into the yard, and throwing it open, called to a group of sailors dressed in robes and caps of fox-

skins—shaggy men with tremendous beards and gaunt features. They soon surrounded their Captain, and gazed in horror at the pictured chronicle of their past sufferings.

That morning while Caterina and Teresa were hastening through the gardens, the survivors from the *Orange* stepped ashore on the quay at Amsterdam. Jacob told his crew that before reporting themselves to the States-General, he voted they should go home and embrace those who had mourned them as dead. His speech was received with acclamation, and the little party set out in company in the direction of the Brocade Fabriek, the first home that lay in their route. "Jan will see his Teresa," said Jacob, "and I my wife; but who will have courage to tell the Van Rennens that we have left our poor carpenter in the ice?"

This was how it happened that a group of sailors lingered in the yard within call when Jan threw open the bedroom window.

"There's our hut!" cried one.

"Our dead bear!" exclaimed another.

"Poor Van Rennen—ay—ay—poor chap!" shuddered a third, and then the word "magic" was whispered, but not too low for Jacob to hear. It roused him from the state of terror bordering on lethargy that seemed to have seized upon him since he first saw the pictures. "My Caterina," he groaned. "Thou saidst somewhat of danger to her, Jan, eh? What was it?"

Jan had darted to one of the salon windows, and now cried frantically, "Why, there's Babette, and his honour the Mayor, and the magistrates are hurrying along with her."

"Is my father with them?"

"No, I do not see him."

"Come, my men, we'll go too," said Jacob, possessed by a terror that he could hardly account for; and the whole party clattered downstairs to join the authorities of Amsterdam.

We must go back in our history to the time when Caterina and Teresa entered the summer-house. They wished to take a journey in quest of their absent ones, and here was their opportunity; they had gained a solitude unlikely to be disturbed. Caterina began operations, and as soon as possible paused in her motion of the hand, and questioned her medium. Her expression was one of ecstasy as she caught the answers that told of hope.

"I see the boats," murmured the pale Teresa—"they are near the quay—they touch—Jan lands—the Captain—ah!"

A cry of joy broke from Caterina. "My Jacob! Soon we shall meet." She bent over Teresa, who lay stretched on the bench. Her features were transfigured—her eyes sparkled with delight. There were faces at the window, but she was so engrossed in listening to Teresa's words, that she did not perceive them. There were the malign countenance of Truda; Stinsen's evil face; Van Rennen's glaring eyes, all directed upon her.

"Now," whispered Truda, "ye see for yourselves; ye know how those pictures came to be painted."

"Ay," said Van Rennen, "we see; and the enemy of souls is there, though ye see him not. The sorceress deserves to die. What say ye?"

A murmur of assent ran along the row of peasants crowding the window of the summer-house. One clutched a bundle of straw; another brought sticks from the shrubberies; Stinsen drew "kindling" from his pocket and set fire to the pile heaped against the wall; and Truda, a fierce joy in her eyes, fanned the flame with her apron. A smoke rose and penetrated the chinks and crevices of the summer-house, and Caterina began to cough. She stood upright, and looking away from Teresa, glanced at the window. Her ecstatic expression changed into one of fear. She thought herself alone with Teresa, and behold, through the smoke she saw the angry faces of her enemies—Truda, who hated her—Van Rennen frowning at her—others whom she did not know, but who looked like foes. In vain she scanned the faces for a single friendly one.

"Teresa, awake!" she cried wildly.

A blow drove in the window, and a gust of smoke rushed through the opening, blinding and choking her; but she could not look away; she still saw dark, wicked faces enveloped in clouds of smoke. Her senses reeled. Catching the rosary at her girdle, she tried to pray, for something told her that her peril was deadly. She called Teresa once more—no response. The pale girl was in a happy dream.

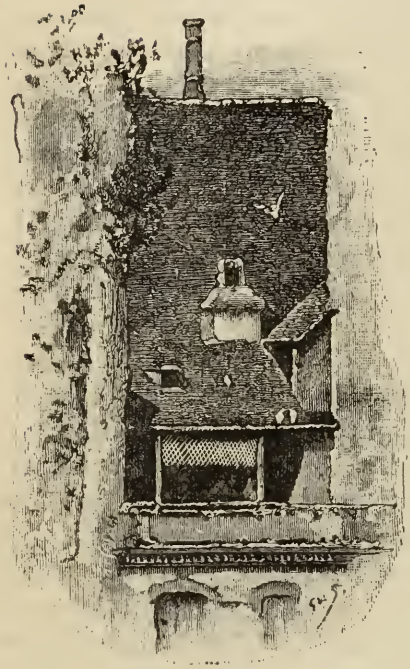
Caterina was strong: to die was not easy. She ran to the window to escape the stifling heat, panting for breath. The heat drove her back into the room. Her persecutors were gone—not a face was to be seen; flames leaped up against the window in their stead. "My Jacob, too late," she moaned, sinking down beside Teresa.

At that moment there was loud uproar outside. The Mayor and their worships had arrived on the scene, and with them the outlandish sailors in white fox-skin robes and caps. There was shouting and scuffling, pursuit and flight; but the band from the Haagstraat were taken captive, and securely bound and guarded. Jacob and Jan did not join in the struggle. They tore the burning sticks away, and dashed against the summer-house door with all their force. This was no time for revenge. The law was there to deal with the assassins, and Caterina and Teresa might perish if they did not bestir themselves.

"Stifled!" said Jacob, raising his wife in his strong arms and carrying her into the fresh air, followed by Jan with Teresa. "No, thank God—*not* stifled—she breathes—her eyes open. Teresa, too" (his good heart feeling for her companion, even at such a moment), "she also lives. Thank God, thank God!"

FAIR NORMANDY

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



Chartres.

WE arrived one night at the old cathedral town of Evreux. It was very dark, and it was growing late. The hotel omnibus, waiting at the station, tore away with our two selves and a lady very much taken up with a bundle. She, however, was not going to the hotel. We had no sooner rattled down a long, dark, narrow street, with noise enough to wake the dead, and sharply turned a corner, than it drew up at the door of a very modest mansion.

The lady was evidently expected; the door opened as by magic; two blooming damsels with a simultaneous cry of "La chère maman!" smothered the dear mamma in embraces, as if she had been absent from home twelve years instead of twelve hours. The omnibus was paid; the happy trio, all sharing the burden of the bundle, entered this abode of bliss; and the door was closed. Another act in a little domestic drama was over; the curtain was down, and the audience, that is to say, the omnibus, departed. We really felt depressed; as if we ought to have shared in that welcome: that happy home-coming; but we were shut out from it. Ours, however, awaited us in a far-off land. We were not of the hermits of the earth.

We now had the omnibus to ourselves. It rattled on through more narrow streets, all dark as Erebus. It was ten o'clock, and the worthy people of Evreux had evidently retired. They are wise people, and carry out the old proverb; we will hope they also have their reward, and are wealthy.

The streets, I say, were dark. If they had gas at Evreux, the gas had evidently been put out at nine o'clock, in obedience, possibly, to a curfew bell as silver-toned as that we had lately left at Rouen. There is such a thing as social as well as political economy; and in a town where murders and burglaries, and all the other wickednesses of this world are unknown, why burn gas when people are sleeping?

We peered out into the night, trying in vain to reconnoitre. We could see nothing but houses faintly outlined. The streets were deserted; the place looked uninteresting. Gabled roofs and latticed windows were conspicuous by their absence. Apparently the charms of Rouen would not be found in Evreux. We tried to catch a glimpse of the cathedral, once so famous, still so beautiful; but no noble tower or tapering spire met our gaze; no deep-toned bell or silvery chime smote upon our ear.

We looked at each other. Despair was not on our faces; disappointment I think was. Man is so given to hasty judgment, to forming a rapid impression and coming to a sudden conclusion; and then forgetting that he is not infallible.

"This is one of the evils of going too rapidly through a country," said H. C. sepulchrally. "Of having so little time at your disposal that you cannot correct your errors. You have to choose your places and you may choose rightly or wrongly. You may come to a dreary and uninteresting spot, and ten miles away leave behind you an artistic paradise. You cannot depend upon nine people out of ten that you meet. They have no judgment; no eye for the beautiful, simply because they have never cultivated it. It is not that we, who appreciate all that is lovely in nature and art, are born with a sixth sense; it is that we have cultivated our ordinary faculties and intellect, and have awakened within us the spirit that almost everyone possesses in a latent or undeveloped condition."

This was a very long speech for an omnibus, and a little difficult to follow amidst so much rattling and rumbling. But I felt more than ever that H. C.'s destiny would be parliamentary as well as artistic. One great merit is, that he will not be put down. If you attempt to argue with him, he overwhelms you with a torrent of words and reasoning delivered with an oratorical force of lungs which completely extinguishes you. He carries the day. In this long speech under consideration I did not altogether go with him. People are not all born with the love of the beautiful within them, though much may often be done by training. But to everyone his gift, and he who paints a great picture would probably as a musician have been a failure. The artistic temperament is equally a gift. The power of appreciating between what is actually grand and good, and what is inferior, is first born within us, then ripened by cultivation.

The omnibus rattled on through the deserted and tenebrous streets until at last it stopped in front of the large *porte-cochère* of the hotel. Like the town itself, the hotel seemed in tolerable darkness. No blaze of gas or glare of any light relieved our despondency. But the kitchen door on the left was open, and a warm, ruddy glow, and a gleaming from copper vessels revealed a picture of domestic comfort which was eminently suggestive. It proved more suggestive than anything else in the end.

The inevitable bell rang a sonorous peal; out came the landlord

all bows and politeness, and really good and amiable and affable; out rushed a waiter to help in the reception, and to add dignity to the hostelry.

We had not dined, and in reply to our demand for substantial if modest fare, our host looked grave and contemplative. The salle-à-manger was closed; the chef had gone to his café and his game at écarté. If he did not have his *parti* at night, the next day everything went wrong in the kitchen. This the landlord explained parenthetically.

We replied that we should easily be satisfied under the circumstances; but he must remember that "ventre affamé n'a point d'oreilles," and would not and could not be altogether denied.

Beyond the archway we saw the outlines of a large courtyard, where sundry vehicles reposed. From the café within the yard a stream of light fell upon the pavement, making more visible the surrounding darkness.

We were now conducted up a winding staircase, rough, rude, and guiltless of carpet, to the first floor. The corridors were long and barnlike; our footsteps echoed in a ghostly manner, though we trod softly after our usual habit. Loud footsteps are only less irritating than loud voices.

We were ushered into a great barn of a room, which made it quite a walk to go from one end to the other. The windows looked on to the courtyard, and just below us on the pavement was the light thrown from the café. All surrounding was dark and impenetrable. We could faintly outline the opposite windows, the sheds below, the omnibus which had had the honour of conducting us, and from which the horses were now being unharnessed. The waiter lighted two tapers which faintly illuminated the huge room, and cast ghostly shadows about it. Everything connected with the place seemed ghostly to-night; but we should have been glad to have seen even the shade of the chef gliding into the kitchen and commencing operations on our behalf. There was only too much fear that our dinner would also be ghostly: a true Barmecide feast: for the salle-à-manger windows were in front of us, and the darkness behind them was as profound there as elsewhere.

The room looked bare and cold after our more luxurious quarters at Rouen, but it was not really uncomfortable. The landlord himself was certainly the best part of his hotel, for he was very civil and obliging. The waiters were also willing enough, but they were somewhat rough and uncivilised, and went about their work with staring eyes and heads of hair that looked for all the world as if they, too, had seen ghosts and had not recovered from the shock.

We went down, even as we had come up, the ghostly corridor and winding staircase, and boldly made for the kitchen. It was deserted, but a good fire roared in the *poële*, of which the cover was off, so that here at least there was nothing ghostly except the shadows that

played and flitted about shelves and pans, cast by the flickering flames.

Not a soul was visible, but a waiter crossing the yard at the moment had seen us enter, and giving the landlord notice, the latter soon appeared on the scene. By dint of great force of will and power of argument, the dining-room was besieged and taken, a gas-burner was lighted, casting more ghostly shadows in the long, bare room, and we sat down to a very modest repast, where the bread was all crust, the viands were very much flavoured with garlic, and the cheese had to be kept under a glass shade. H. C., who is a philosopher, and to whom nothing comes amiss, upon principle, made the most of his opportunity; just as in Majorca the greatest mysteries in the form of dishes were those he most revelled in; but I had to be contented with dry bread; the garlic had to be abandoned, and when the cheese was uncovered, the room had to be forsaken.

After our very light repast, we went forth into the town in search of the cathedral. We had not to search long. A turning almost in front of the hotel very soon brought us before the noble pile.

Very noble it looked to-night, outlined in the darkness. Against the background of the sky its proportions seemed gigantic. There was a silence and solemnity about it that was infinitely effective. The towers rose grandly, and the spires seemed to mount upwards and touch the heavens. Absolute silence reigned. Not a creature was about but ourselves; not a crow rose uneasily in answer to our footsteps, not an owl complained "to the veiléd moon" that we disturbed her solitary reign.

Even in the darkness we could distinguish the beauty of the north doorway, and trace the fine outlines of the large windows, the rich gothic decoration of the pinnacles, the delicate flying buttresses and the imposing beauty of the central tower, with its spire, where again the small flying buttresses could be faintly outlined in the night. Seen in this obscurity there was an indescribable dignity and grandeur about the whole building, which promised much for the morrow. Would it be confirmed, or should we on the morrow be disillusioned of our first impressions?

Alas, even by this light, we saw that at least one great disappointment would await us. The cathedral was in the hands of the restorers, those Goths and Vandals who are, I suppose, necessary evils. Much of the building was surrounded by temporary palings, within which lay huge blocks of stone, and all the other signs of a mason's yard and a mason's ruthless work. So great was the restoration in process that at the east end it seemed to be a species of demolition. At the present moment, indeed, there appears to be a mania for restoration in Normandy, and we scarcely visited an important church or cathedral that was not more or less disfigured by scaffolding.

We left the cathedral to its repose, and wandered about the streets of the town in further search of the picturesque. We found it

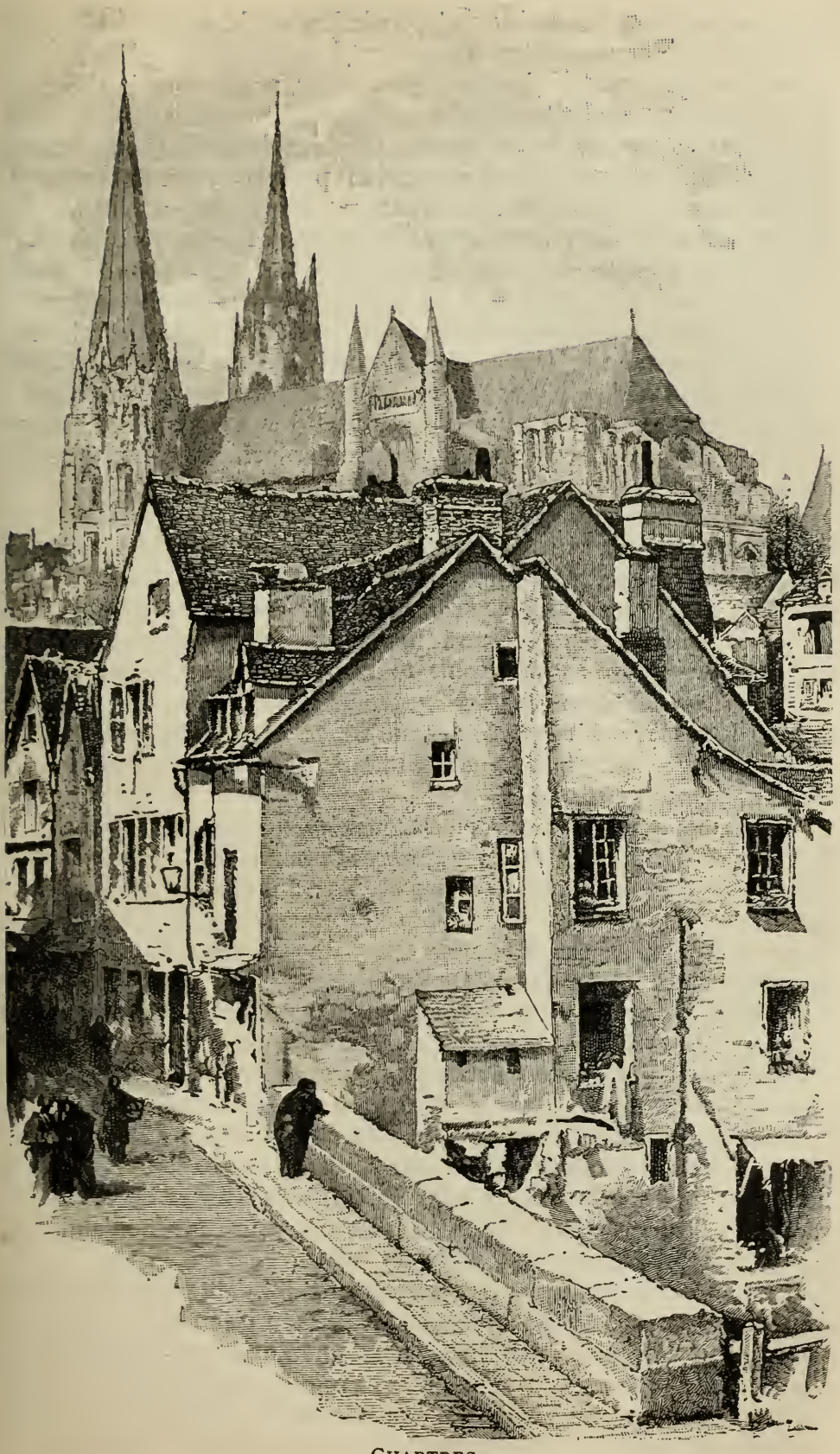
not, though it exists here and there in a few of the old timbered houses yet remaining as remnants of former times, with their quaint gables and latticed windows. To-night, however, they eluded us, like will-o'-the-wisps or phantom ships : for we ever seemed coming upon them, yet never did so. The street, for the most part, appeared narrow, uninteresting and modern ; not a gas-light was visible, not a soul crossed our path. At length all this silence and solitude smote us with a sort of reproach. If all the world was sleeping, ought we not to be doing likewise ? The very echo of our footsteps seemed to disturb the sacred quiet : and towards the ghostly hour of midnight we found our way back to the hotel.

Here everything was darker and more shut up than ever. The great portes-cochères were closed ; everyone had retired, except a sleepy waiter, who reproachfully blinked at us (so our consciences interpreted the expression) as he opened the small door in the great gates, and gave us just sufficient space to squeeze through. One of us at least felt terribly ghostlike after that late very frugal meal, and required very small space indeed for entering within the desired haven.

The fire had gone out in the kitchen, and all the ruddy glow had sunk down into deadness and darkness ; the air felt cold and chilly the café lights were extinguished ; the courtyard was buried in profound gloom. We could just make out the outlines of our dear omnibus, which immediately recalled to us the lady with the bundle and the charming domestic drama at which the two fair daughters had assisted ; and we felt the present and painful contrast between that scene and this.

We took our light from the hands of the sleepy waiter, but we felt that we need not waste too much compassion upon him. They are the favoured of the earth. Care wrinkles not their brow ; a sleepless pillow is unknown. They can even walk and work in their sleep. A summons will arouse them from their dream of some fair and faithful Gretchen in a far-off land ; arouse, but scarcely awaken them ; they rise to do your bidding ; and the moment the head again touches the pillow, sleep returns and the dream is resumed at the point of interruption.

Happy beings. What know they of the long and silent night watches, when sleep flies away like a phantom pursued, and will not be courted, and will not come ; and life seems to press heavily ; and care and trouble, like the outlines of the cathedral by the darkness, seem ten times multiplied by the stillness of one's little world. But things are only realised when they are felt and come home to us. These favoured ones, exempt from care, know nothing of their privileges and will not admit them. And probably we are all the same as to this power of realisation. Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown, we declare ; we know it to be true ; and yet who would refuse a crown if it were offered to him ? It is only after long wearing and



CHARTRES.

hard pressure that realisation and conviction would come to him, and with it the willingness to lay it aside.

But to-night we, too, like the happy waiter, were soon in the land of dreams; a world peopled by memory and imagination in which we wander as we are led, through amaranthine groves, and repose beside still waters, and where soft green pastures yield to our tread. For happiness is known to none in their waking hours; but we are all sometimes perfectly blest when wandering in the realms of sleep.

The next morning we rose betimes. H. C.'s voice sounded quite a long way off—the room was so large—when he awoke and made the usual English morning inquiry. His bed was under the window, and he was aroused by the noises which are seldom absent from an hotel courtyard, whether the scene be laid in England or abroad. These noises have been handed down from remote ages, and so may be historically interesting; from every other point of view they are disturbing.

It was not our only disturbing element this morning. As usual in French houses, there was a door communicating with the next room, and the next room was occupied. Occupied by two ladies, who talked in loud voices, and seemed to be desperately quarrelling. In vain we coughed, hemmed and hawed, to give token of our juxtaposition; they were as indifferent to us as if we had been deaf and dumb. One of them seemed hysterical; laughed, cried, groaned, implored and raved by turns; until we put her down as a lunatic. It was again a contrast from the domestic picture we had been privileged to assist at last night.

From this strange domestic atmosphere we escaped at the very first opportunity, and made our way through the corridors, from which all ghostly element had departed, and down the winding staircase.

As the dining-room was now open, we did not intrude into the sacred precincts of the kitchen. The vision of the cook at his own door, clothed in white cap and apron, was sufficient guarantee that all was well. He must have won at écarté last night, for he beamed upon us, and the mutton cutlets that we ordered *à la Pompadour*, and the omelette *au naturel*, were done to a turn and served to the moment; whilst in the coffee there was not one trace of chicory.

"Admirable!" cried H. C., who always managed to take the lion's share of two portions: whilst of a dish of three, only one invariably fell to my lot. Though his name was not Benjamin, he evidently regarded me as Joseph.

This morning everything and everyone had brightened, though the waiters still looked as if their heads had been electrified. But they moved, if anything, in too lively a manner, and we breakfasted in a sort of atmospherical and moral whirlwind; for they left all doors and windows open, and rushed up and down the room and to and fro as if the electricity in their heads had also descended to their limbs.

One act they were guilty of which was either great ignorance, or cruel sarcasm, or inexcusable impertinence. When we had comfortably breakfasted, and were preparing to depart, one rushed up with the cheese which was kept under a glass shade, whilst the other brought up the rear of the whirlwind with a huge knife to cut it with. Even H. C. was not proof against the look I gave them, and feebly refused it. "Pas de fromage, m'sieu!" cried the waiter opening mouth and eyes quite wide: "mais c'est un digestif!" H. C. declared he was right; but for a poet it was remarked over and over again in Majorca that he had very strange tastes.

We sallied forth to reconnoitre Evreux by daylight.

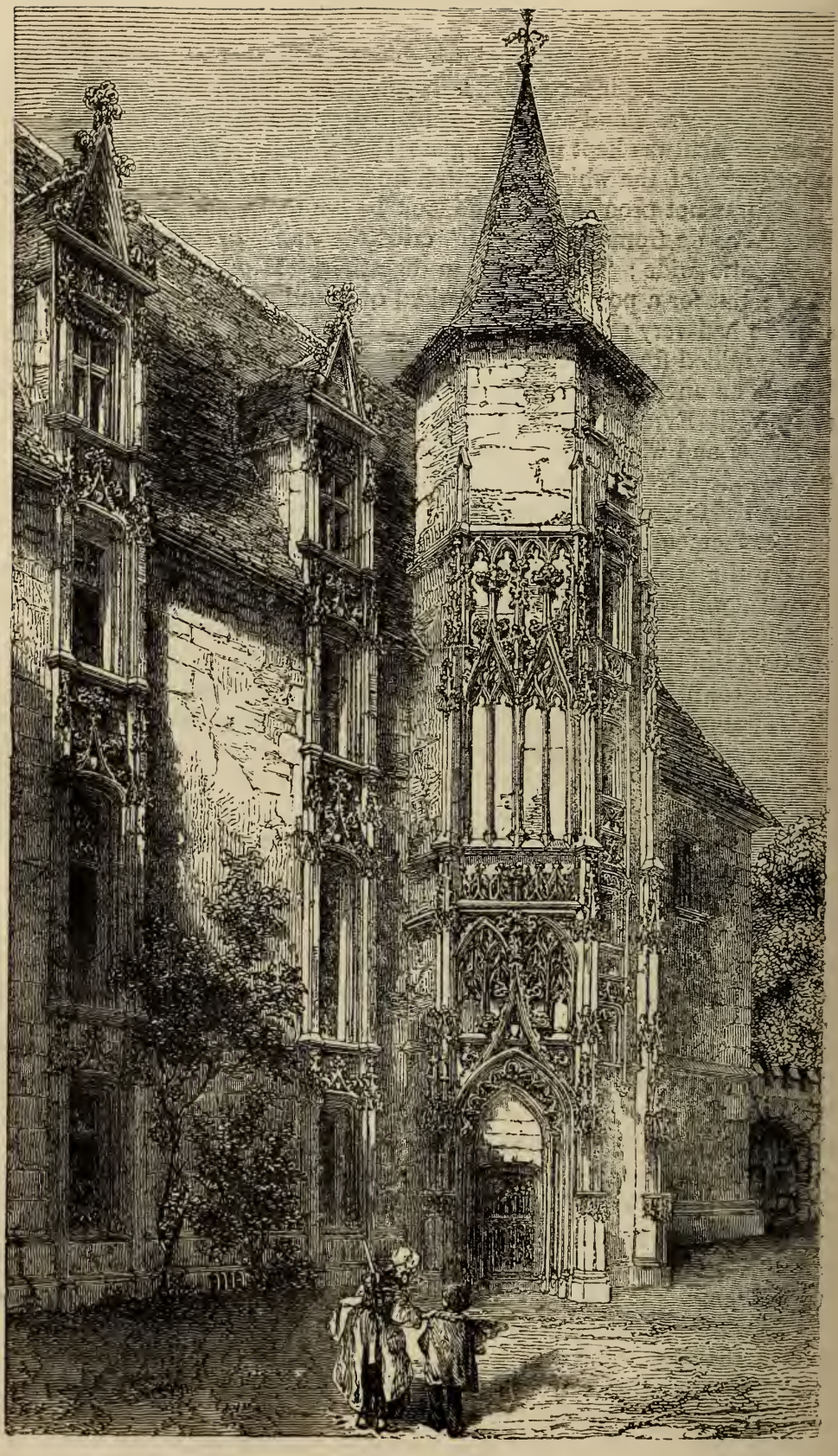
It is an ancient town, with few traces of antiquity about it. Near it is Vieil Evreux, which is the Mediolanum Aulercarum of the Romans, and where some Roman remains have been found. That is not wonderful. Where have Roman remains not been found? The Roman settlement was destroyed by the Franks under Clovis; but the Norsemen at the end of the ninth century destroyed the town which the Franks had built. Next, Henry I. of England burnt Evreux, with the consent of the Bishop, on the understanding that he should rebuild the churches. At the end of the twelfth century it was again burnt by Philip Augustus.

The town is situated in a valley, is relaxing and not very healthy. It is watered by the Iton, a tributary of the larger Eure. Its chief industry is ticking and stocking weaving, and from many a cottage as well as from the larger manufactories, one hears the pleasant whirr-whirr of the hand-loom.

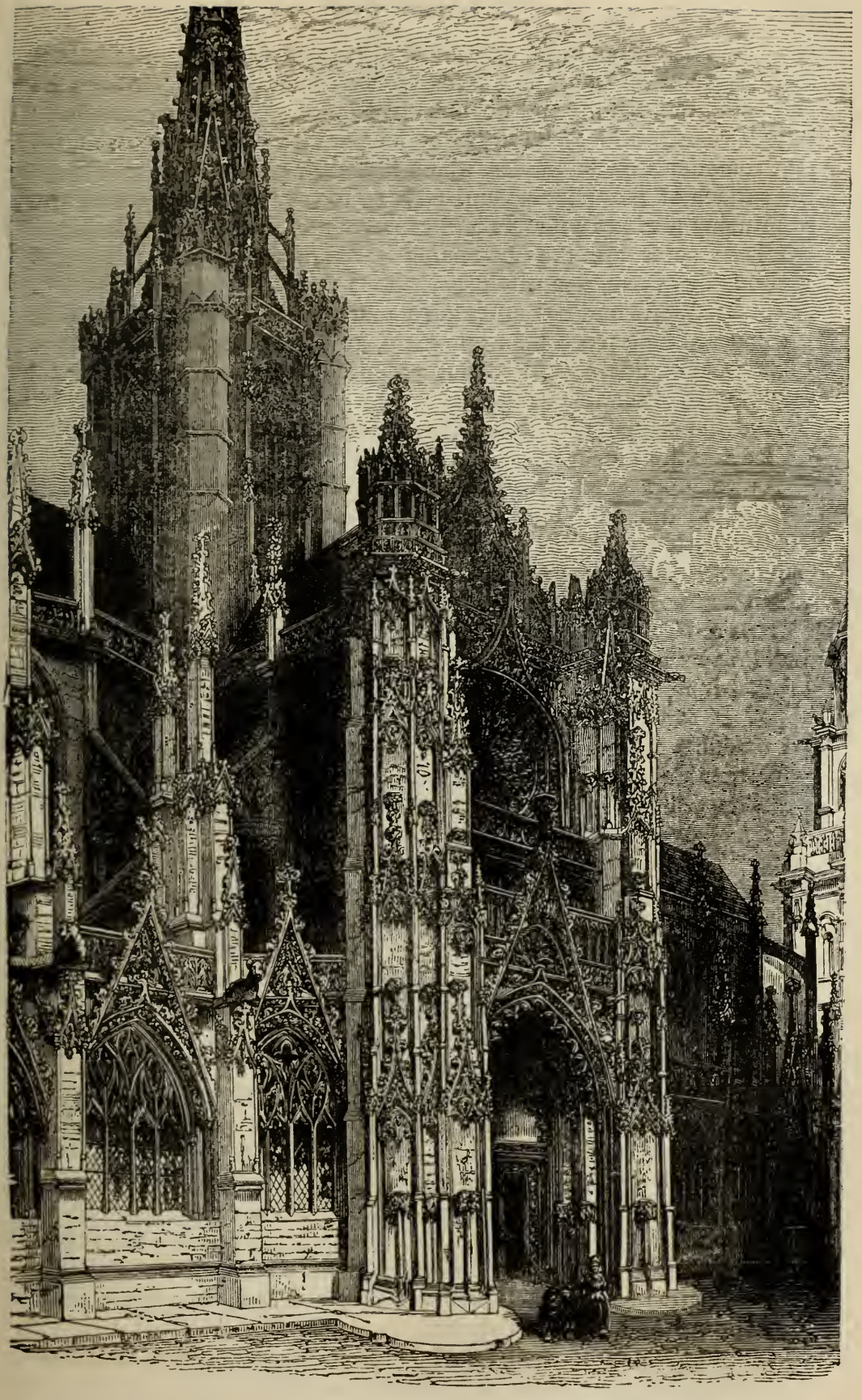
There are certain things that are pleasant to hear; that touch a chord in one's heart, and awake singular emotions, one can hardly tell why. This sound of the hand-loom is one of them. The smell of a peat fire as you pass an open cottage door is another. The tinkling of the goat bells far up a mountain is a third. It must be that these homely sights and sounds and perfumes suggest visions of the short and simple annals of the poor; of domestic peace and harmony beyond the reach of the world; the loves and the lives of Phyllis and Corydon; and so they touch a responsive chord in our bosom; for we all have the same hopes and aims, aspire to the same happiness, cherish the same ambitions. In a word, we are all human. We all have the same ambitions; are all striving after the same ignis fatuus. It is a question of degree with us, more than of kind: and whilst one seeks happiness in the luxurious surroundings of a palace, another seeks it in the chimney corner of his cottage. It all comes to the same. It is a distinction with only a social difference.

The surroundings of Evreux are pretty and picturesque. The country is sylvan and well wooded. Near it, indeed, is a vast forest, which in days gone by was the goal of a singular custom and procession, to which we shall presently refer.

The river Iton here separates into three distinct branches, watering



THE BISHOP'S PALACE, EVREUX.



North Doorway, Evreux.

various parts of the town, and giving it its most picturesque glimpses and effects. You stand on a bridge, for instance, not very far from the cathedral, and before and behind you is a long vista of river crossed by other small bridges, bordered by houses with overhanging windows and sometimes quaint gables, which find their charming reflection on the surface of the quiet stream. Trees, too, overhang the water, and from many a window flowers and creepers trail and droop gracefully.

These spots are the interesting parts of the town of Evreux. Here, if anywhere, you catch suggestions and suspicions of antiquity. A subdued tone and colouring adds much to the scene. Therefore we lingered here more than anywhere, and felt that the shadows and obscurities of last night had not promised that sunrise would reveal anything so admirable as this.

And the cathedral? For that was our first and foremost ambition on leaving the hotel.

As we approached it and stood before it, we confessed to a feeling of disappointment. The hopes raised last night were not fulfilled. In the darkness it had looked noble and dignified, even majestic. There had been a solemnity and repose about it, a softened aspect, which had appealed to one's highest sentiments and emotions.

It is a dangerous ordeal, that first view and contemplation of any building by night-light. The very obscurity appeals of necessity to all that is imaginative within us. Only great perfection will stand the test. If, for instance, you see a building such as the Alhambra first by moonlight, you will not be disappointed when, the next morning, you examine it by the more garish light of day. The second impression will be very different, very distinct from the first, but it will be equally perfect, equally satisfying.

So also in numberless other examples. But in the case of Evreux Cathedral there was a distinct disappointment. It has many faults which were hidden last night by the kindly darkness; and many beauties which were more easily discerned. How good it would be if we could apply this rule to our daily intercourse with ourselves and our neighbours; and throw over each other's shortcomings the veiling mantle of night: being "to each other's virtues ever kind, each other's faults a little blind." But let us hasten on, nor stay to moralise.

We saw the cathedral this morning under great disadvantages. With a vengeance it was in the hands of the restorers. Unsightly palings surrounded a great part of it, and stone work lay in every direction. Everything that last night had softened and subdued was now revealed by the strong light of day. All the east end, with the exception of the bare outer walls, seemed in process of interior demolition. What the result will be in the end it is impossible to divine. The charm of antiquity will be gone, and perhaps the charm of harmony and beauty of outline.

But uniformity of design had long since disappeared, for Evreux Cathedral has gone through many vicissitudes, many changes and

restorations. With all its faults it is still a building of great beauty and grace and interest. It is lofty and of excellent proportions; but its west front is in a debased Italian style, scarcely improved by the two towers above it. At the cross rises a larger, loftier and finer tower, surmounted by a florid spire of wood covered with lead, erected in the fifteenth century by Cardinal de la Balue, the favourite of Louis XI

The towers above the west front are unequal, and are decorated with colonnades and entablatures. The west front dates from the close of the Renaissance period. The cathedral itself was commenced in the eleventh century, and was altered and added to, and finally finished in the eighteenth century, thus going through the throes and anguish and vicissitudes of seven hundred years. Little wonder that harmony of plan and design is not its greatest virtue.

Yet, on the whole, it is imposing and graceful, both within and without. The north doorway, dating from 1511, is one of the richest productions of that period. It is flamboyant in style and of extreme beauty. Of the interior, the lower part of the nave is Romanesque, and probably dates back to Henry I. of England; the remainder is Gothic. The chapels of the choir are closed-in with screens of magnificently carved wood of the Renaissance period; the stalls date from the fifteenth century, as also does the exquisitely wrought ironwork in the treasury. The stained glass in the Lady Chapel and the transepts dates from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and is considered the chief glory of the cathedral. There is a beautiful rose window in the south transept, of which all the mullions are of equal thickness; a sufficiently rare architectural point to make it worthy of attention.

At right angles with the west front and close to it are the great episcopal gates leading into the personal and private precincts of the Bishop. You ring a peal on the great bell, which goes clanging and echoing through the courtyard with quite an ecclesiastical sound. The handle is invisibly pulled by a cordon from the porter's lodge. The door is so heavy that you can scarcely push it open. But once it closes behind you and you are fairly within the courtyard, you feel yourself in a new world. To see this alone is worth a visit to Evreux: it is by far its greatest attraction: almost worthy a second visit, that the impression may be repeated.

We also passed through, the heavy door closed behind us, and we found ourselves in the reverend and imposing precincts. The courtyard was spacious and paved with small stones, between which the grass was allowed to grow. On the right were the low grey stone buildings belonging to the porter's lodge and other dependencies of the Bishop. In the windows of the lodge flowers grew and flourished. Before us rose the ancient, noble and ecclesiastical pile, which since the year 1481 has given shelter to the prelates of Evreux. It is built on the ancient walls, which make, we will hope, a secure foundation. The

architecture is flamboyant, very graceful and refined, and it has all the beauty and dignity of age. Its walls are grey, and very beautiful in tone. A lovely hexagonal turret is built out for the staircase, surmounted by an exquisite conical roof, and you approach the doorway by a small and beautiful flight of steps, which are not sufficiently apparent in our illustration. The roof is slated and slants steeply upwards, in admirable keeping with the rest of the building.

A young boy came forward and offered to show us over the interior. It was worthy of itself. The rooms are large and panelled; with ancient windows—in part modernised—and cross-beamed ceilings. You tread upon floors carefully waxed and guiltless of carpet. On the right we were shown the dining-room, in which a modest luncheon of wine and bread and soup was spread. Perhaps the savoury baked meats were to follow.

"I bid you hasten here," said the youth in a quaint French style, which seemed to adapt itself to his surroundings: "for Monseigneur's secretary is about to take luncheon."

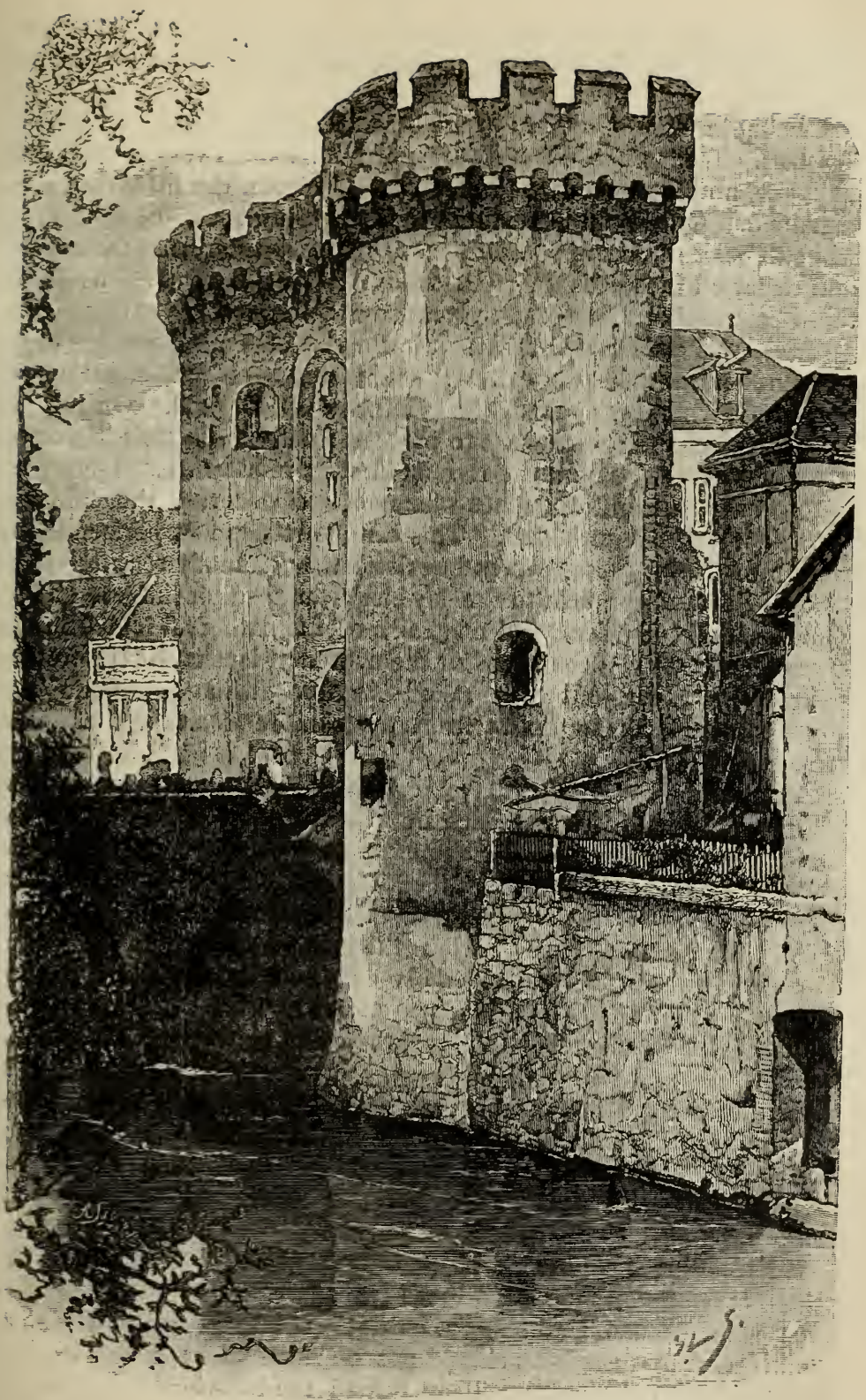
"And Monseigneur?" we naturally asked.

"He is absent for his holidays," was the reply, exactly as if he spoke of a schoolboy and not of a reverend bishop. "He will not be back for a fortnight."

Even as we left the room the secretary, robed in priestly garments, entered. He moved quietly as a shadow, and had he been a monk could not have been more silent. But he gave us a grave and polite bow as we passed away and the door closed him in. We were quite sure now that the savoury baked meats were to follow. Quietly as he moved, he was large and rubicund; he might possess the silence of the monks, but never the asceticism.

The reception rooms opposite were large and imposing, full of a deep, dark tone, and shedding abroad an atmosphere that seemed full of learning and spoke of many pious and dignified lives to which they had done homage. The quiet and repose of centuries lay upon them. Up the quaint winding staircase we passed into the library: a fine room, full of ancient and rare volumes, and wonderfully illuminated manuscripts of great antiquity. Here and there these parchment volumes had been wickedly handled; by visitors who had no conscience or principle, said our youthful guide—who in this learned atmosphere looked like a young philosopher; and many a no-doubt splendidly illuminated initial and border had been cut out with a penknife and removed.

There were many fine portraits of bishops dead and gone hanging upon the panelled walls; and quaint tables and chairs, massive and ancient, completed the imposing scene. From the windows, forming part of the enclosure of the courtyard, rose the south walls of the cathedral. Here was no sign of restoration, and we gazed upon the building in all its venerable beauty. Beautiful, indeed, and graceful, very noble and dignified it looked. All the work going



OLD GATEWAY, CHARTRES.

on at the north side, the masons running to and fro, the huge blocks of stone lying about, the unsightly palings, might have been a hundred miles away.

Closing-in the courtyard were the beautiful ruins of gothic cloisters. Once upon a time they must have been very refined and exquisite, and it was a rare pleasure to gaze upon the little that now remained. One trembles when wondering how much of that little will still exist when the so-called restorers have completed their work and departed in search of fresh fields of slaughter. Let us hope these beautiful outlines of a bygone day will escape.

There was celebrated at Evreux in the far off days, long, long ago —even before what we call the middle ages—a curious fête or ceremony, which was called the ceremony of St. Vital. On the 1st of May the chapter were wont to proceed in a body to Bois l'Eveque, the forest on the outskirts of Evreux already referred to. Here they cut down palms and branches wherewith to decorate the saints in the chapels of the cathedral. This ceremony was first performed by the canons; but these reverend ecclesiastics gradually relaxing their labours deputed the task to the lay-clerks and subordinates. Time went on, and the priests and chaplains of the cathedral joined in the ceremony, and even the vicars of the cathedral lent it the support of their countenance. It was called La Procession Noire, or The Black Procession; no doubt from the sombre dress of those who took part in it.

A curious effect it must have had wending its way through the town, escorted by the populace in a body, and passing down the country roads into the neighbouring forest. The priests looked upon it from a religious point of view, the lay-clerks and more frivolous members of the procession as a great occasion for fun and frolic. These issued forth from the cathedral in their cassocks and black square caps preceded by the choir boys, the vergers and all others who in any way officiated in the church. Each carried a pruning knife for cutting the branches in the woods, which they brought back, aided by the escorting populace. The latter would cover the official members of the procession with branches and greenery, until in the distance the whole presented the appearance of a moving forest. All the bells of the cathedral were set a-ringing to make known to the town that the ceremonies of the Black Procession and the 1st of May had begun.

It happened one year that the Bishop, possibly disturbed in his palace by so much jangling of bells (who that has had any acquaintance with Roman Catholic towns does not know the infliction?), commanded that the bells should not be rung. The lay-clerks paid no attention to the order. They turned the bell-ringers out of the cathedral, in which the latter lived night and day as its guardians, seized upon the doors and the keys for the four days during which the ceremony lasted, and pealed away fiercely and continuously.

They even carried their defiance so far as to hang up by the armpits at the windows of one of the bell towers, two of the canons, who had gone up to them as ambassadors from the Bishop. The names of the canons were Jean Mansel, treasurer of the cathedral, and Gauthier Dentelin.

All this took place about the year 1200. It is evident, therefore, that in some things the world has improved. We cannot fancy bell-ringers of the present day, under the most extreme provocation, hanging up two reverend canons, say from the cross of St. Paul's or the towers of Westminster, and letting them suspend in the air like scarecrows from a cherry tree.

As time again went on, innovation and abuses gradually crept into the May ceremony. It became an occasion for all sorts of follies and extravagances. Sawdust would be thrown into the eyes of the passers-by, until they were half-blinded; others would be made to jump over broomsticks until their limbs refused to jump any longer; others again were made to dance and caper about until they dropped from exhaustion. Then masks were introduced and strange disguising dresses, and the whole thing became a species of carnival.

The lay-clerks, returning from the forest, would take possession of the cathedral and drive the canons from their stalls; who in revenge for such sacrilegious treatment would descend to the cathedral vaults and play at ninepins. One can hear the rebuking echo of the balls sounding through roof and aisle, even above the revelry of concerts and dances which the lay-clerks there held in the meanwhile.

The cathedral is said to have been ruined and destroyed so many times, that it is impossible now to form any conception of its original design. All that is positively known is that after it was demolished by Henry I., King of England and Duke of Normandy, in 1125, that monarch, possibly seized with a wholesome remorse, caused it to be rebuilt in such magnificence that William of Jumiéges, in his history, declared it to be the most beautiful of all the churches of Normandy.

But the cathedral was constructed at different periods, and though Henry I. may have begun the good work, he did not complete it. The nave was built by Robert de Roie, Bishop of Evreux under Philip Augustus, who had ruined the church. The choir and its collaterals were built by contributions raised by King John, by Charles V., by Bishops and Counts of Evreux, after the devastation committed by the English and the Navarrais, under Charles the Bad, King of Navarre and Count of Evreux.

Louis XI. built the lantern and the leaden bell-tower, called the silver tower, from its then white and glistening appearance in the sunshine. The southern window, the Chapel of the Virgin, the sacristy, the robing-room, the choir galleries, the flying buttresses that surround it, the cloisters—all date from the same reign.

The magnificent north doorway and part of the great tower were constructed under Ambroise and Gabriel Levenens, Bishops of Evreux; the remainder of the tower, which is called Gros-Pierre (suggestive somewhat of disrespect to the Apostle), was completed in 1636. The south tower was constructed towards the middle of the fifteenth century.

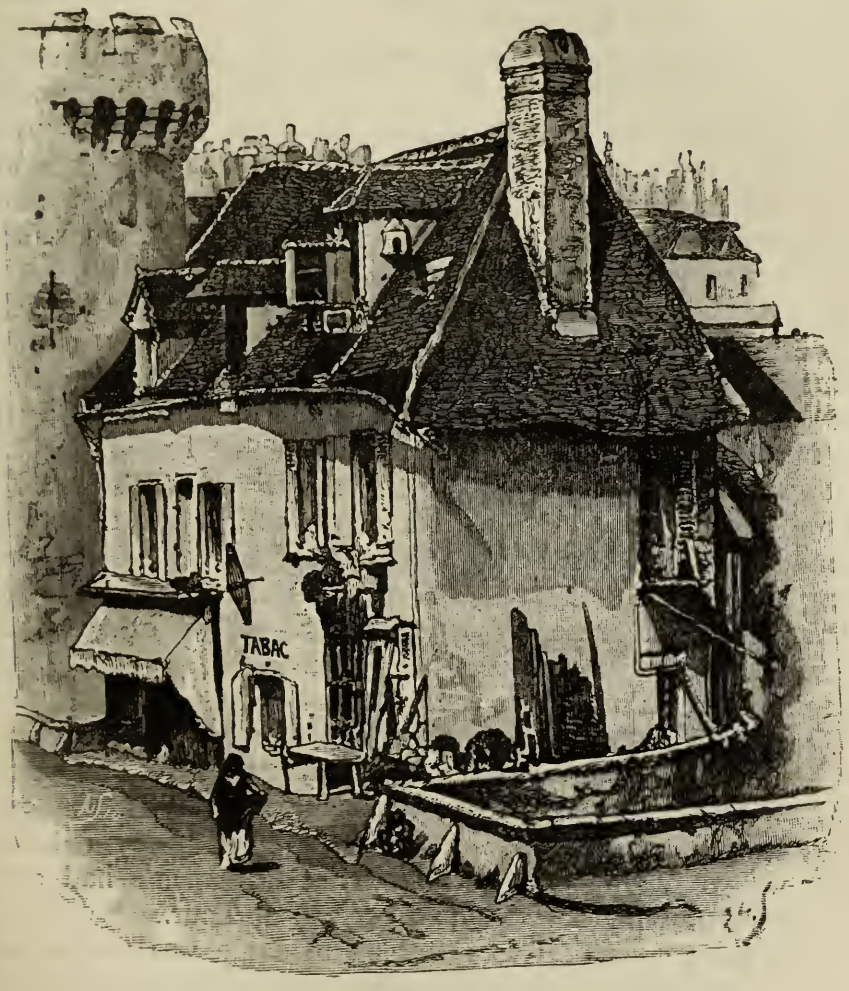
Before the time of the Revolution, the great tower was ornamented by a statue of Henry I. of England, holding out a half-opened scroll indicating the donations he had given to the See of Evreux, and to the churches and tithes of Verneuil and Nonancourt: contribution also taken from the estate and barony of Brentford, in England.

There was a great deal of beautiful oak carving in the church, and of rare old ironwork. The windows are of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and are historically and artistically interesting. They contain amongst other portraits those of several Bishops, of Charles the Bad, King of Navarre, and of Louis XI.

The See of Evreux was once very large and important, though it has now become little more than a suffragan bishopric of Rouen. It contained five hundred and forty parishes and eleven abbeys, without including an immense number of collegiate churches and chapels over which it held sway. Its boundaries lay within the departments of the Seine, the Aure and the Rifle, and were watered by the Eure and the Iton. The Bishops possessed four rich baronies. The suburb of St. Gilles was the limit of one of them, and its people in sign of vassalage or subjection were compelled to wear a small embroidered crosier upon their vestment. The Bishop had also the right of largely controlling the appointment of the head of the important college of Evreux, of which the under masters were lay priests, the head a member of the chapter and a canon of the cathedral.

When a Bishop was elected, the new prelate would leave the neighbouring Abbey of St. Taurin, and proceed to the cathedral, escorted by the monks as far as the palace. There he received the Pastoral Crook from the hands of the canons, headed by the eight senior canons, who were called barons, by reason of each possessing one-twelfth part of the Barony of Angerville. A vassal-charge upon the Lord of Feugnerolles compelled him to strew with straw the way taken by the Bishop from the palace to the bridge where the procession was formed. Here the prelate received the oaths of submission from the canons and the said lord, his especial vassal, with a declaration that they would defend him "envers et contre tous, fors le roi." Returning to the palace, the Bishop entertained at a banquet two hundred persons. At this banquet the Lord of Gouville was cup-bearer. It was his duty to pour out the Bishop's first draught in a magnificent silver-gilt goblet, and Monseigneur having emptied the costly vessel presented it to his cup-bearer as a memento of the occasion.

Thus in those days we see that many of the refinements and courtesies and quiet attentions of life were in existence. In many ways it was an age of chivalry, counterbalanced by much that was rude, barbarous, superstitious and cruel. It was scarcely an age of principle and right-doing. Every man's desire was his conscience, and the strong and the mighty, though wrong, prevailed over the humble and the frail, however right.



OLD HOUSES, CHARTRES.

And thus we also see that the past history and atmosphere of Evreux are distinctly ecclesiastical. And even now the ecclesiastical and religious element is evident, even though the sound of the weaver's shuttle is heard in her streets, and tall factories have raised their secular heads above the houses. But they are not aggressive. You do not greatly notice them. They do not aspire to rival the sacred walls in interest or attention.

The one other interesting church of Evreux is that of St. Taurin. It was formerly an abbey church, attached to the abbey or monastery

of St. Taurin. It is in the Romanesque style, and dates back to the eleventh century, with Gothic additions of a later date.

The outer wall of the south transept is decorated with an arcade of semicircular arches, which, though somewhat rudely executed, are very powerful. The panels are diapered with a design composed of tiles of red and white cement of a very unusual type. A portion of the nave and tower dates from 1407, and the west gateway from 1715. The arcade is supposed to be a relic of the church built by Richard II., Duke of Normandy.

The only remarkable objects in the interior are the windows of the choir, bearing the legend of St. Taurin ; a bas-relief in white marble of the Renaissance period ; another bas-relief in wood, and some carved wood of the Louis XV. period in the Chapel of the Virgin ; and a very singular font of the thirteenth century. In a crypt below the choir reposes the body of St. Taurin himself. The church altogether is a very interesting example of its period.

In a small square at the north end of the town is the belfry or clock-tower, a curious but over-rated monument of the fifteenth century, much restored. It is surmounted by a spire of wood covered with lead, the height of the whole monument being about one hundred and forty feet. It contains a fine bell dating back to 1406, which was christened by one of the sons of Charles VI. The old walls of the town are visible in several places. Many of the foundations were formed with fragments of bas-reliefs and columns dating back to the earliest days of the Roman occupation.

Having seen all these things, we thought we had exhausted all the curiosities of the town. But we were mistaken. The greatest curiosity yet remained ; one that proved inexhaustible.

We were passing down a narrow street, simply to while away a few spare moments, when our eyes were caught by an announcement that here dwelt a lady who dealt in antiquities. In the window were one or two rather rare-looking plates, and we rashly entered. A young woman advanced who regretted that madame had gone out for a *commission*, but she would be back in an hour.

There was a good deal to examine ; madame was undoubtedly a person of some taste and judgment ; and half-an-hour unwittingly passed away.

At the end of that time a lady appeared in slippers and robe de chambre ; and it was evident that madame, instead of being out doing a *commission*, had only very lately risen from her couch. But she was equal to the occasion, brought all her energies to bear upon the matter, displayed her wares to the best advantage, and could show proof of their excellences. She was unusually rich in old and rare brocades, magnificent stoles and capes that had adorned the portly person of many a canon or vicar or even bishop, at the celebration of high mass. With these and many other things she tempted us ; and we fell ; and finally departed sadder, wiser men. We had

resisted in vain. Madame was a syren, and in her hands we could only yield to our fate.

It was one of our last impressions of Evreux. We had now exhausted the place and were ready to depart. When our time was up we bade farewell to the hotel, to the affable landlord, the electrified waiters, who all turned out in a body to bid us bon voyage. We entered the inevitable omnibus, and once more rattled through the streets of the quiet little town. The station was reached, and we took train for Chartres. In due time its quaint houses rising on a hill, its battlemented gateway, its picturesque stream and its wonderful spires pointing heavenwards, were ours to revel in, and became, for the moment, the delight of our eyes, the theme of our dreams.

SONNET.

THREE names of women on the tragic page
Of history shine as letters writ in gold
On vellum scroll of legends dim and old ;
Three crownéd women who flung down their gage,
Amid the din of war and lion-rage
Of nations wrath. Says Mary, fair to see :
" A babe I played with Scotland's crown. Ah me !
The Queen of France was I, and youth and age
Still know my name." " And I the imperial throne
Forsook to die amid the rabble throng,"
Says Antoinette, so proud and pale. Says Joan,
A peasant maid : " I brooded o'er the wrong
Of France, till on my virgin brow the crown
And golden aureole of martyrdom came down ! "

JULIA KAVANAGH.

THE WHITE CAT.

I.

I WAS crossing from the Law Courts to my chambers in the Temple. It was the week before Long Vacation, and I was looking forward to a well-earned rest. Constant attendance at the Courts had made havoc of my nerves, and I needed to replenish my overtaxed resources.

I was walking rapidly, my hands in my pockets, my head bent towards the ground, when I suddenly became conscious of shouts to which I had hitherto paid no heed. At the same moment a hand touched my arm, and a passer-by told me that it was my attention which the shouts were intended to attract; and turning, I saw a coachman even now gesticulating from his box. With a feeling of annoyance I crossed the road.

"Did you call me?" I asked impatiently.

"I did, sir. Her ladyship wishes to speak to you."

Then I was aware that a fat forefinger was beckoning to me from the interior of the brougham.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Oswald Jones!" said her ladyship. "You are Oswald Jones, aren't you? I am delighted to see you; I am indeed. You are not looking well. Come inside for a moment: I wish to speak to you."

I obediently entered.

"Ah, Mr. Oswald Jones!" she continued; "see what a penalty you pay for success!"

I began modestly to assure her ladyship that the prize was worth the pain.

"No doubt, no doubt—to an ambitious man. But you should not overdo it. You are never without a headache, I am sure; you have no appetite; in short, you're a miserable creature."

I was beginning to protest, but her ladyship cut me short.

"Not a word now. I have not lived sixty years for nothing, and I say that you, a successful barrister, with a large practice, are, nevertheless, a miserable creature. Your mother was a dear friend of mine, and I reproach myself with having neglected my friends. Now I feel myself bound to look after you. When do your holidays commence?"

"To-morrow is the last day of term."

"Then next Monday morning you must take yourself and luggage to Waterloo, and come by the 10.15 train to Barkington. Someone shall meet you, and you shall spend your vacation with me."

"My dear Lady Pownceby," I exclaimed, appalled at the thought of spending two months with this old lady: "I could not think of

troubling you. I was thinking of going to Branscombe with a friend."

"You are not to go to Branscombe: it's too fashionable; you would not rest there. I will take no refusal; you must come. We'll make you comfortable. We are quiet, you know, but not dull; my niece is with me, and there are several good people in the neighbourhood. I shall expect you on Monday morning—don't disappoint me. Now go home; take an old woman's advice and have a basin of gruel before bed to-night. Good-bye."

I accepted her plump hand despairingly. I was incapable of resisting her authoritative invitation—her size added weight to her argument—and so I found myself engaged to rusticate at Barkington

Lady Pownceby, whom I hardly knew, was the widow of an Indian merchant, who, having won a fortune and a baronetcy, died, leaving his childless widow to console herself with the solidity of one and the sentiment of the other.

Duly, on Monday morning, I left Waterloo, and in a couple of hours was seated in Lady Pownceby's dog-cart, listening languidly to the inane monotone of the coachman. My hostess met me with effusion at the door, and insisted on my going at once to my room, where I found a luncheon laid en invalide. In the afternoon, she took me round her ample grounds, pointing out things here and there for me to admire.

"Dorothy is out," she said presently. "She is very busy with her poor women this morning. She is very useful in the village; indeed, our vicar, Mr. Haig, calls her his assistant-curate."

"Dorothy is your niece?"

"Yes; my poor sister Mrs. Braithwaite's daughter. She is an orphan. You will meet her at dinner, and I'm sure I hope you will be great friends."

I hoped so too. I never was a lady's man. Of lady friends I had not one, and of acquaintances but a few. What would two months be at Barkington if Dorothy and I were not friends? I was anxious to meet her. Her name sounded prim, I thought; and her aunt's mention of parochial work had raised a foreboding within me. She was sallow, angular, old-young lady, I felt sure, who spoke always with polish and precision, and whose conversation savoured of the mothers' meeting. I was angry with myself for coming to this place, and waited for the dinner-hour on thorns.

Even then no relief came. As the bell rung, Lady Pownceby sailed into the drawing-room. I looked past her in search of the niece, but she was not there.

"Dorothy hasn't come in yet, Mr. Oswald Jones. We will not wait dinner for her; one never knows when she will return. Will you give me your arm?"

I felt that I was a man with a grievance. I, Oswald Jones, of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law, one of the rising men, the papers

said, had condemned myself to spend my vacation in an obscure country house, and Dorothy Braithwaite (but a rather pretty name, I thought), spinster, showed herself so unimpressed as to absent herself from the house the whole day. I felt disagreeable, and sipped my soup in silence. But with the fish came Dorothy.

"I am sorry I am so late, aunt," she said. "Mrs. Wade's Tommy has the measles, and I had to mind her other olive-branches while she fetched the doctor. This is Mr. Oswald Jones?"

I had risen, and she looked at me with a frank smile as we shook hands.

"I am terribly hungry," she said. "I was beginning to fear that I should be too late to get anything."

She sat down and began to eat with a healthy appetite. I watched her. My foreboding was utterly stultified. Not angular, but tall and stately; not sallow, but with a complexion of red and brown, fair hair, and a pair of eyes so large, blue, dark-fringed, expressive, that I felt my visit was not in vain. I would have gone twice as far to make the acquaintance of the owner of such eyes. She was not prim, but perfectly self-possessed. She seemed to ignore me. She seldom spoke during the meal, and when she did, it was to tell her aunt of some incident of her day's work. Occasionally she would look up at me, and I was charmed with her delightful eyes. When the ladies left me, I did not linger long, but hastened after them. Lady Pownceby was settling herself for her post-prandial nap; Dorothy was sitting at the window, leaning back in her chair, and looking out into the gathering dusk.

"Come and sit here," she said to me, and I placed a chair opposite her.

"You must make yourself at home, Mr. Oswald Jones," said a sleepy voice from the other end of the room. "I'm an old woman; you must put up with my weaknesses."

"I am rather surprised to find myself here," I said to Dorothy.

"Are you? Aunt often speaks of you. She thinks a great deal of you."

"Indeed. I hardly know her."

"She reads the *Times*, you know, and whenever she sees your name in the law reports she reads them with ten-fold interest. 'Here's Mr. Oswald Jones's name again,' she will say; 'I really must know more of that young man.'"

"Why does she always call me by my full name? Why not Mr. Jones simply?"

"Oh, there are so many Joneses, you know. Our curate's name is Jones, and no doubt she calls you Oswald Jones to distinguish you from him."

Perhaps Dorothy was to be assistant curate in a more particular sense. Strange to say, I felt jealous. But I was prevented from asking any questions by a sudden introduction to another inmate of

the house. Something stirred behind the curtain at my side, and out sprang a large white cat, which, having been disturbed in its sleep, dug its claws into the carpet and arched its back in cat fashion, and then leapt into Dorothy's lap. Dorothy began to fondle it, stroking its head, putting her head against its, and performing those many little tricks which ladies and cats enjoy. Now I abominate the whole feline race, but the thing I hate most in the world is a white cat. And this cat especially won my detestation. Its fur was spotlessly white, and the fact that I could find no fault with it made me hate it the more. Dorothy spoke to it and kissed the animal. I loathed it.

"I hate cats!" I cried.

"Popsy hates men," Dorothy serenely replied. "Mr. Arthur Jones, our curate, you know, is the only man she will allow to touch her."

"Perhaps he is not the only Jones," I said, feeling more jealous still. "Let me try."

But Popsy did not approve of my patting. Somewhere from her interior proceeded a low rumbling, her ears were laid by, and I judged it wise to relinquish the experiment.

"We are to be enemies, then," I said; and I fear I was scornful of Dorothy's evident affection for the cat.

Here Dorothy suggested that we should walk in the garden; I agreed, and that walk was the first of many. Before a fortnight passed, I was madly in love with Dorothy. I was distractedly happy when in her company. But I felt some little uneasiness because of the Rev. Arthur Jones and the white cat. I had watched the reverend gentleman carefully. He was a bright, happy-faced young cleric, and his behaviour left no sort of doubt in my mind that he loved Dorothy. And his high spirits seemed a proof to me, either that he had won the lady or fully expected to do so. Scarcely a night passed without my dreaming of him or the cat. In one of my dreams I saw an ancient Sybil warning me with outstretched finger to beware of the white cat, and as I gazed, fascinated, at the animal, the form of its countenance was changed, and I saw the curate's face, wreathed in a triumphant smile.

Time sped rapidly away. I went with Dorothy to pic-nics and garden-parties; I took her for drives, walks and rides; I boated with her, played tennis with her, and listened to her singing. I regained my health, and lived in an Elysium. I determined that my vacation should not close without a question and an answer—mine the question, Dorothy's the answer. I loved her; did she love me?

I suffer from an embarrassing defect of constitution. I can talk to the bewigged solemnities on the bench without a quickening of pulse, but with ladies, if ever I wish to go beyond mere society talk, I become nervous and confused, and stammer painfully. Although I

had made up my mind to ask Dorothy my question, day after day slipped by and it was still unasked. The last day of my visit came. I was to leave by the last train, at ten o'clock. I passed the day with Dorothy, but said no word to her of what was on my heart. Dinner-time came, and still I had said nothing. Lady Pownceby, after declaring that she would forego her nap on this my last evening, went to sleep in the drawing-room, while Dorothy and I sat in our favourite seats by the window. She had some needlework, but not a stitch did she make. I had a book, but not a word did I read. The dog-cart was to be at the door at a quarter-past nine; it was now half-past sight.

"Are you sorry your holiday is over?" Dorothy asked.

"Very," I said laconically.

Another silence!

"Will you have much work to do, when you get home?" she said.

"I hope so."

Silence again!

"You will forget all about us."

"Never."

A quarter to nine!

I was in a dreadful state. I was hot and cold by turns. I could not sit still.

Nine o'clock!

Still I had not asked my question. Many times I had opened my mouth to begin; then something seemed to grip my throat, and I could not utter a word.

Five minutes past nine!

I was in agony! I looked out of window; I took out my watch; I played with the chain; I crossed and uncrossed my legs; I blurted out—

"Are you sorry I am going?"

"Of course. You have been very pleasant company."

I thought she spoke coldly, and saw again the metamorphosis of cat into curate.

"May I hope that you would be pleased to see me again?"

"Oh, yes!"

Silence!

Ten minutes past nine!

"Dorothy!"

"Yes?"

"Will you—can you—are you engaged to the curate?"

"Oh, no! How absurd!"

"Can you—will you—do you—would you like to be married?"

"I don't know," she laughed.

"Would you—could you—Dorothy—I must tell you——"

S—s—s—s—sh!! A prolonged hiss startled us both. I had

come close to Dorothy, and my right hand was approaching hers. I felt a sharp pain in my fore-finger; and the white cat flew out of the window recess, glared and spat upon me, and sprang into Dorothy's lap. I stood up and cursed that cat; Dorothy uttered a little cry; Lady Pownceby awoke, and said "Dear me! Have I been asleep?" and a servant entered and said, "The dog-cart is waiting for Mr. Oswald Jones."

I had time only to see my boxes carried out and to take a hurried farewell of my hostess and her niece, and then I was driven away to the station. And I had not asked my question!

II.

For the next two months I devoted myself exclusively to my work I heard no concerts, saw no plays, ate nobody's dinners but my own; but took my guineas as they came. I had leisure to reflect. I anathematised the white cat, and regarded myself as one with whom the gods had dealt hardly. But for the cat, I might now have been the happiest instead of the most miserable of mortals. I began to see dimly that I had made a fool of myself. I had had months in which to say my say to Dorothy; and then what an exhibition I had made of myself at the last moment!

A week before Christmas I received a kind note from Lady Pownceby, asking me to give her and her niece—and her *niece!*—the pleasure of my company during Christmas week. I laughed at the thought of it. I replied by return of post, excusing myself very emphatically, and made up my mind with some bitterness to spend Christmas in bachelor solitude.

On the morning of Christmas Day, I found awaiting me when I came downstairs from my bedroom a large hamper. With a fervent benediction on the kind, thoughtful soul who had shown such practical sympathy for my forlorn condition, I cut the cord. What pictures in my mind of mince pies and other Christmas delicacies! What anticipation of the delight of teeth meeting teeth in the seasonable turkey! I raised the lid—but drew back with almost a scream, for out of the basket sprang, not vivified mince pies or a resuscitated turkey, but my sworn enemy, the white cat!

What surprise! What disappointment! What disgust! What my still greater surprise when the cat, instead of spitting and swearing at me as was her wont at Barkington, now raised her inoffensive tail and arched her graceful back, and rubbed her irreproachable white fur against my legs! The cat had become friendly towards me. I divined that it was hungry, and placed some milk before it, for which it purred its thanks.

When I thought of this strange event, I came to the conclusion that a deliberate insult had been intended. I grew exceedingly wrathful. And I felt sceptical of the love which could consign its

object to the tender mercies of a railway guard. But second thoughts induced me to believe that Dorothy must have had an object in sending her cat to me. She would hardly insult me so gratuitously. And so I gradually weaved in my mind an explanation. Dorothy loved me, and wanted me, and had sent her favourite to me as a messenger of peace and good-will. She had placed the cat unreservedly in my hands; what could she mean but that she preferred me far above the cat? My timidity disappeared. Glancing at the clock I found that I could just catch the 10.15 train. I hurriedly threw some things into my portmanteau, consigned the cat to the care of my astonished landlady, and rolled off in a cab to Waterloo. I had only time to scramble into the first compartment the guard opened for me, when the train started.

As soon as I collected myself I looked to see who my one fellow-passenger was.

"Dorothy!" I exclaimed.

It was she. She had herself brought up her Popsy; she told me that she expected me to come by the first possible train. I was delighted, and when she begged me not to think her unmaidenly in the course she had adopted, I gave her oscular demonstration how content I was. What need to set down what we said and did! The guard kept our compartment sacred to us, and passed the window with averted head. In a month Dorothy and I were one; and we get on very well with each other and with our mentor, Lady Pownceby; and our most familiar friend is the white cat.

AUSTIN H. BRAND

"BESIDE ALL WATERS."

IT was a summer Sunday afternoon, and through the western window of the old grey village church the slanting sunbeams poured a flood of many-coloured light upon the worn stone pavement. The noble army of Martyrs, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, stood out in all their glory of crimson and gold; and from the Apostles' window an amber ray from the robe of St. John the Divine fell full upon the children in the wide old rectory pew, touching each litt'e head as with an aureole.

The church was unusually full, for the tidings that a stranger was to preach that afternoon had brought out many who would otherwise have found the August sun a sufficient excuse for taking things quietly at home. They were a good, honest, steady-going set of people, and devoted to their own Rector, who had been with them many years; but with the thermometer at 90 degrees in the shade it is hardly surprising that it took that very great novelty, a stranger, to draw them once more from the distant parts of the village when the bell rang for afternoon service.

A stranger "parson" was a rare phenomenon in a little obscure hamlet buried away in the heart of the country. Moreover, this particular parson was a man whose fame had penetrated even into this remote old-world village; a man who was noted as one of those zealous and self-denying workers whose lives are spent in a hand-to-hand conflict with evil in some of the many "dark places" of the great far-off metropolis. He was taking a brief and hardly-earned holiday, walking through the green lanes and country villages, resting and refreshing heart and brain, sick and tired with the noise and strife of London. He had stayed the night before at the little inn, and while wandering about in the meadows had come upon the Rector returning from a sick call, and had fallen into friendly chat which ended in an offer to help on the morrow, and to preach for him in the afternoon.

"But," expostulated the Rector, looking at his companion's worn face, graven with lines not of age, but of hard work and care, "I thought you were taking a holiday!"

The other laughed as he answered: "It will not hurt me. I have been too long in harness to be ever quite happy out of it. I have taken a fancy to this place; perhaps I shall never see it again; and I have a feeling I should like to say a word to your people, if you will let me."

So he had his way, and as he went up the pulpit stairs quite a crowd of faces were lifted towards him. Only in the rectory pew one little head remained bent until the first sound of his voice.

He stood quite still for a moment as the last notes of the hymn died away, and in that moment his searching eyes had taken in the whole scene. The group of children just below him, the rugged farmers with their buxom wives, the rough labourers, the village shopkeepers with their more fashionable sons and daughters, the old men and women from the alms-houses, the school-children in the gallery, and the sprinkling of the "gentry" come on purpose to hear him. Beyond, through the open doors, he caught a glimpse of waving trees and a glimmer of gold from the corn-fields, the faint twitter of birds was in the air and the glow of the setting sun was over all. In that brief moment it framed itself in his mind like a picture, and became a part of an after-memory. Then he raised his voice and said, in penetrating accents that rang through the church, rousing the dullest to attention and lingering for long in the minds of some of his hearers :

"*And as* JESUS *passed by he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*"

It had been part of his morning reading, and the passage had struck him as likely, from its narrative form, to attract the attention of his congregation. A startled thrill seemed to run through the people, and the little bent head just below the pulpit was raised, and a pair of soft brown eyes were turned slowly towards him.

There was a profound silence, and the child sat as if spell-bound while the preacher sketched for them in words made vivid by his strong and vivid faith, the strange dark world in which that blind man moved—never lighted by sun or star; always the spirit sitting alone in its shadowed chamber unable even to picture what the outside world was like. The dawning of day over the distant hills; the sunbeams dancing on the wavelets of that pool of Siloam; the glories of the Eastern night, when countless burning stars hung over the stately city of Jerusalem; the wonders of the mighty Temple—all these were as a sealed book to him. The people thronging to and fro known only by a sense of presence and of touch. Nay, even those who loved him best: the mother who bore him, and who had doubtless wept bitter tears for him: recognised only as a voice! And then he pictured the sudden change of light for darkness, as sudden as the change from death to life, when the waters of Siloam touched those sightless orbs, and they opened to the dazzle and brightness of the sunlight, the shifting multitude of countless forms; and, distinct amidst them all, more glorious than any ray of sun to him, the grave kind eyes of Jesus Christ looking down with such unspeakable love upon His finished work. Ah! was it not almost worth while to have been born blind, for in the first moment of sight his soul looked out of the long darkened windows, and saw the face of Him who was the Light of the World!

Clearly and tellingly the speaker dwelt upon the story, with its

wonderful complex meanings, bringing home its lessons with irresistible force to the hearts and consciences of his hearers.

The sorrow and suffering that darken the face of the whole earth, the sins that blind and distort, the follies that lead astray, were touched upon with unsparing realistic force, but the closing words were words of comfort and hope.

"Somewhere or other, some time or other, you will all stand in the midst of that penetrating light and look on Him. Even now He may be very near; the thing that troubles you so much may be the herald of His footsteps. Oh! be sure you obey His voice! And then when you lift your eyes you will see not only the meaning of all the darkness but—Himself. God in His mercy grant you that revelation! And for those whose outward eyes are really darkened—those who are as His martyrs glorifying His name—pray for them, beloved, you who have this beautiful changeful world to speak to you of your God. But think also how marvellous will be their revelation, when they who have never seen the traces of sorrow and the hideous mask of sin that saddens this our earth shall be made whole as they look to Him and are lightened. Often have I tried to picture it to myself, and it seems to me that all their gladness will be concentrated in this stupendous vision, and that the first words spoken in the risen life may be that joyful cry, 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see.' Yea, and that sight shall compensate for the gloom of the long night of earth, for their eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the Land that is very far off."

The sermon was ended, and the congregation streamed out into the peaceful graveyard where the quiet dead slept beneath the daisied grass. Some of the people stood talking in little groups together; others hurried away as if their hearts were full.

The preacher stood apart from them, leaning over the wicket-gate and looking out at the peaceful land. The sound of children's voices fell upon his ear, and he turned to see the Rector with his bevy of laughing lads and lassies dancing round him, while one little lad of about eleven was clinging closely to his father's hand. "Take me to him," the child was saying as they drew near. He recognised the curly head round which the sunbeams had been playing all the afternoon, and with a thrill of pain there flashed across him the meaning of the anxious startled look with which the Rector had turned to him as he read out his text—the child was blind.

"Oh! I am so grieved," he began almost instinctively as he moved forward. "Why did no one tell me?"

But the child, guided by his voice, stretched out his hands to him, saying, as he felt himself taken in those kind arms:

"Oh, sir, did you make that sermon for me?" And then he added: "I have been very cross and complaining, I know, but

now I am going to be good. And will it be just like that when Jesus Christ comes to open my eyes?"

The Rector drew his companion aside for a moment, and there were tears in his eyes as he told him of the trouble that shadowed their home.

"He has been blind from his birth, my poor little lad," he said, "yet he has always been the happiest little creature until this last summer. But lately, I cannot tell why, except that he has not been very strong, he seems to have come to a knowledge of his loss, and he frets over it that it almost breaks his mother's heart, and nothing I can say seems to meet his need. I own I shivered when you began, until I saw his rapt expression, and then I felt that you had a message for him. He was so anxious to speak to you himself that I could not refuse him. Will it trouble you too much to talk to him a little? You must come back with me to spend the evening."

"Leave him to me for a little while here, will you, and I will bring him home?" asked the other. Adding gently: "Forgive me; what pain I must have caused you. I never dreamt of such a thing. Had I known, I should never have dared to preach that sermon. And yet, perhaps, it was what I came here for."

He turned as he spoke, and little Sebastian slipped his hand into his, and thus they left them together. The other children shrank a little from the somewhat stern brown-bearded man, but the blind child felt no such fear. He knew by instinct that he was as safe within those sheltering arms as in his father's care, and as they sat together on a grassy mound, he clung to him as if he had known him all his life, while he poured into those sympathetic ears the story of the sorrow that oppressed him.

In childish language, yet with more than a child's intensity of feeling, he described how, surrounded with love and care, shielded with such untiring devotion, it was long before he realised that he was different from the other children. Until now that he was older the sense of his calamity had been gradually growing upon him, and the knowledge of the beauty and usefulness from which he was shut out pressed upon him with a weight that almost crushed the childish spirit. Brothers and sisters off at school, and he must always stay at home. Every day less and less was he able to share in their work or play. In all their plans and hopes he could take no part. They would go out into the world and live their lives, but for him there would never be a man's work, a man's place. He must always be a burden at home, never a helper. "Until sometimes I think," he added with a precocious sadness, "that God did not love me as much as my brothers and sisters, else why did He let me be blind?"

Patiently and earnestly his companion talked to him. He did not seek to treat him as a child, for he saw that here was a nature

developed beyond his years. Rather as though to an equal he strove to set before him both the mystery and the blessedness of pain. The very finger of God touching humanity, the fellowship of His suffering, the true sonship with the Father. Strange thoughts for a child, and difficult to grasp, but every word seemed to fall like balm upon the little wounded heart. "And remember, my boy," he added, "God never makes a useless thing. He has put you into the world, and He has something for you to do; to be brave and true and to set forward the honour of His name. And be sure that it is through your blindness, the very thing that seems to you to make you powerless, that He has willed your work shall be done. It is because He loves you so dearly that He has made you a co-worker with Him to carry out His Will. We cannot understand now, you and I, but one day you will wake up and see the meaning of it all; and when you see it and see Him, then indeed you will be satisfied."

Life is full of such meetings and partings, and on the morrow the stranger went his way, but he left a blessing behind him. There were those in the village who never forgot that sermon, and who still look back to it as a turning-point when they made their first real stand against evil, and groping blindly after God, sought until they were found of Him.

But it was to the Rector's little son that his message had come in all its fullest meaning—it was woven into the very fabric of the child life. He became once more the bright, merry little lad of old, yet with a difference; gentler, tenderer, and more patient than he had ever been before. He grew to be the household comforter, the one to plan and think of endless little acts of kindness; the one always at leisure to sympathise with every joy or trouble; always ready with hopeful words and caresses, that, as his mother often said, "took away the sting of things." And not only in his own home, but by many a cottage hearth, his presence was as welcome as the sunshine; while for himself he seemed to have ceased to trouble.

"I shall see one day," was his hopeful answer to any word of pity, and in that hope he rested. Those who loved him best, as they caught his clear low laugh, and saw his sweet unselfish ways, and daily growth in true yet childlike holiness, gave ceaseless thanks to God for this their greatest earthly blessing. And even as they prayed they trembled, they scarce knew why—he seemed nearer heaven than earth.

And the Preacher, what of him? He had returned again to his work, and the pressing needs and claims of his great city parish, the stunted souls and perishing bodies; and the ceaseless strife with sorrow and sin once more absorbed every faculty.

Yet the memory of that afternoon lingered long in his heart, and for the sake of it some three years later he turned aside on another brief holiday and stayed once more at the little inn. A man of few words, he asked no questions but shortly made his way towards the

Rectory. As he passed through the peaceful churchyard something attracted his attention. It was the sunlight falling on a white marble cross, and lighting up with startling distinctness the inscription: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." And beneath it the words: "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty."

At once the truth was borne in upon him, and it scarcely needed the name to tell him who lay sleeping there. There were tears in his eyes as he stood beside that little grassy bed under the great Apostles' window, where the western sunlight always fell.

As he lingered on, a hand was suddenly laid upon his arm, and he turned to face the Rector. There was a close hand-clasp, but neither spoke. At last the father said, brokenly:

"I thought we should see you again. Yes, we have given him back to God, the light of our eyes. It was the fever in the spring-time. I knew from the first how it would be, and he was so glad to go. Death had no terrors for him, for he had never forgotten that sermon of yours, and often we have thanked you in our hearts for what you had done for him. I believe he had learnt to be more than content, to be happy in his lot, with that end in view. And just at the last he stretched out his arms as though he saw some one who was hid from our eyes, while his face lighted up with a wonderful flush of joy, as he cried out, 'Father, mother, tell him it is just as he said—now I see.'"

The Rector broke off suddenly, and again both were silent. And then the young man said sadly:

"I had so hoped to see him again. I have never forgotten that earnest little face. But my life is so full of work; it is so rarely I have a moment free. Ah! I wish that I might have seen him again!" And as he looked towards the western skies, and thought of the glories opened evermore to those unclouded eyes, he added: "I came to ask, 'Is it well with the child?' and I am answered. 'Surely, it is well.'"

Amid his lonely, often thankless, labour, when the seed must be sown so constantly, and the reaping comes so rarely, there flashes from time to time across the vision of one of God's most faithful servants a sudden memory of a wistful, childish face, with its soft blind eyes—eyes that are open now in the glad light of Paradise—and it brings to him a message of hope, of the final solving of the dark and difficult problems of human griefs and human sin; and he says to himself, as he turns again to the unceasing conflict, "One day I too shall see."

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

A LADY'S PRIVILEGE.

"VERY strange," soliloquised Jack Trevor one dull October morning, some half-a-dozen years ago, while dividing his attention between his breakfast and the second perusal of a letter which had arrived by the early post. "The most extraordinary thing I ever heard of: a woman, who is never decently civil to a fellow in town, and now thaws in this inexplicable way. What on earth can have made her think of me?"

The missive which so perplexingly exercised the comprehensive faculties of the young barrister, addressed to "John Trevor, Esq., New Inn, London, W.C.," ran as follows:—

"Belford Hall, Rokesley, Leicestershire, Oct. 3, 188—.

"DEAR MR. TREVOR,—We are expecting a few friends at the end of next week, and shall be delighted if you will join our party. My husband desires me to add, by way of extra inducement, that pheasants are unusually plentiful this season. Any day after Wednesday will suit us perfectly.

"Sincerely yours,
"DORA PEMBERTON."

"Next week," reflected Trevor, lighting his meerschaum, "let me see. Not much work likely to come in for a month at least, if it does then, and the pheasants are a temptation. Yes, I'll go." So he at once accepted the invitation, announcing his intended arrival on Thursday in the ensuing week by an afternoon train. "Nothing like being precise in these matters," he said; "it leaves her no excuse for not sending a trap to meet me."

When Trevor reached St. Pancras on the appointed day, he was greeted on the platform by a cheery "Hollo, Jack!"

"Hollo, Long Odds!" he replied, evidently pleased at the rencontre.

"Where are you off to?" inquired the gentleman designated as "Long Odds," a sobriquet bestowed on him by his intimates in allusion to his deplorable habit of investing his slender finances on racehorses possessing no earthly chance of winning; but whose real name was the Honourable Walter Noland, third son of Lord Lowater.

"Pemberton's," briefly responded Trevor, as, following his companion, he took his seat in a first-class "smoking," which, as generally happens on the Midland line, they had all to themselves.

"Guessed as much when I saw your gun-case," remarked the Honourable Walter; "so am I. Cross-country journey, four miles from Rokesley station, and a slow train from Leicester. Not bad, though, when you get there—first-rate shooting and undeniable Larose.

"What puzzles me," said Trevor, between two puffs of his cigar,

"is why the old woman should have asked me. I hardly know her; and beyond a waltz or two with Ethel——isn't that her name?"

"You're on the wrong tack, old man," interrupted his friend. "Old mother Pemberton would never have troubled herself about you and I if Sybil Courtenay hadn't insisted on it. She told me she would."

"Sybil Courtenay!" exclaimed Trevor with unusual animation. "Is she there?"

"Of course, or we shouldn't be where we are. She is the Admiral's niece, you know, and he likes to have her with him. The old lady cut up rather rough about it at first, lest she might interfere with Miss Ethel, who has been out three seasons, and has as much chance of marrying as a cab horse has of winning the Derby. But Pemberton put his foot down, and Mrs. P. collapsed at once. Sybil's a charming girl, and an heiress in a small way, a thousand or twelve hundred a-year, and a very independent young party to boot. Do you know, Jack, it has often struck me that she and you would go uncommonly well in harness together."

"Perhaps Miss Courtenay mightn't be of the same opinion," remarked Jack in a constrained tone. "I might as well ask why you have never tried your luck?"

"I?" replied Long Odds with a stare of astonishment. "Bless you, I'm out of the running altogether. No woman in her senses would ever dream of marrying *me*, and it wouldn't suit my book at all if she did. No indeed, not if I know it. As things are, I'm looked upon as a safe man, both by mothers and daughters—a very enviable position, I assure you, which will keep me out of harm's way until either the governor's mortgages are paid off, or——Why, Jack, you're not listening! Hang me if the fellow isn't asleep! Improving conversation is positively thrown away on him."

After delivering himself of this profound remark, the speaker, having ascertained by a glance at his watch that they had barely accomplished one-half of their journey, followed his companion's example, and was soon in the land of dreams, from which neither of them awoke until the train steamed slowly into Leicester station.

We may as well profit by their slumber to touch briefly on the social position of one of the travellers of whom little has hitherto been said. Jack Trevor, who had lost both his parents at an early age, had been consigned by them to the care of an uncle, at that time in possession of a considerable fortune, which, however, was subsequently reduced to a moderate competence by the failure of a bank. Up to the period of this financial disaster he had made Jack a liberal allowance, and at his death bequeathed to him the small residue of his property, which, together with the supplementary emoluments derived from an occasional brief, and from his contributions to the *Metropolis* and other periodicals, secured to the young barrister an income amply sufficient for his wants of about five hundred a-year. He and the Honourable Walter had been chums

at college, belonged to the same club in Piccadilly, and were both of them, whenever the latter could tear himself away from the more congenial society of his sporting colleagues, recognised habitués of some of the best and most exclusive houses in London.

During the preceding season Trevor had frequently met Sybil Courtenay, and had even ventured to pay her more than one visit in Lowndes Square, where, when not monopolised by her uncle the Admiral, the young lady resided with her mother. As far as our hero was concerned it was a case of love at first sight; but his invincible timidity had hitherto debarred him from any open avowal of his sentiments, which Miss Sybil, by that intuitive faculty of perception peculiar to the female mind, had perhaps already divined. The news, therefore, that he was soon to be domiciled in the same house with the object of his affections appeared to Jack an opportunity not to be lost; and he firmly resolved, provided his courage did not fail him at the critical moment, to bring matters to a crisis; or, as Noland would have tersely expressed it, to "go in and win."

At Rokesley station the friends found a trap awaiting them, roomy enough to contain themselves and belongings, including that indispensable encumbrance the Honourable Walter's valet; and in less than half an hour arrived at their destination.

"What time do we dine, Gilson?" inquired Long Odds, who being a frequent visitor knew every servant in the house by name.

"Dressing bell just rung, sir," replied the butler. "James will show you your room in the bachelors' quarter, next door to Mr. Trevor's."

Long before his companion had finished his elaborate toilet, Jack had found his way to the drawing-room, where most of the company were already assembled. Cordially welcomed by the Admiral, and greeted with a frosty smile and a flabby shake of the hand by the hostess, he glanced round the room and discovered the object of his search engaged in conversation with a tall man of soldier-like aspect, whom he had a vague recollection of having seen before. He had just succeeded in catching her eye and was on the point of advancing towards her when the announcement of dinner, and the almost simultaneous entrance of Noland, all haste and apologies, occasioned a general move. A look, however, of pleased recognition from Sybil in some degree consoled him; and having been formally presented by his host to Mrs. Beresford, a sprightly widow of five-and-thirty, who chattered incessantly during their progress to the dining-room, he soon found himself, to his intense delight, seated exactly opposite his lady love and her attendant cavalier.

"We are a small party to-day," said his lively neighbour when she had finished her soup; "and if some of them were out of the way they wouldn't be missed. That solemn Sir Geoffrey Hawbuck for example, on Mrs. Pemberton's right, who only speaks in monosyllables, and old Lady Totterly who falls asleep between every dish and has to

be roused by the butler whenever he comes round. Did you ever see anyone," she rattled on, "so changed for the worse as poor Ethel? She is positively plain. They've asked young Broadacres on purpose for her, but I fancy he wishes himself anywhere else. People say she has a penchant for the new curate, but of course that would never do. Is this your first visit to Belford?"

"Yes," replied Trevor. "But tell me, Mrs. Beresford, as you are less a stranger here than I am, who is that man sitting by Miss Courtenay?"

"Don't you know? That's Travers, Captain Travers of the 'Blues.' Very attentive, is he not? Follows her about everywhere. He might do worse, for, by all accounts, twelve hundred a-year would be a godsend to him. But, somehow or other, I doubt its coming off."

"Why?"

"Because the love-making seems to be all on one side, and Sybil's a girl who knows how to keep her own counsel."

At this juncture, old Lady Totterly was with difficulty awakened to a comprehension of her hostess's repeated signals, and was at length carefully marshalled into the drawing-room. Left to themselves, the men congregated together at the head of the table; and Long Odds, who, having been wedged in during dinner between the prim Lady Hawbuck, as monosyllabic as her husband, and Miss Blake, an elderly spinster as blind as a beetle and as deaf as a post, had experienced, as he whispered to Jack, "anything but a rosy time of it," avowed his intention of squaring matters by punishing old Pemberton's Larose.

"We ought to have good sport with the longtails to-morrow," said the Admiral, filling his glass with the nectar in question, and passing the jug on to Noland, "for I've kept the home copse on purpose, and can promise anyone who likes it, a 'warm' corner."

"Sorry I shall not be able to accompany you," observed Travers. "I have some letters of importance to write, which will occupy me all the morning."

"The pheasants will be the gainers by your absence," courteously remarked his host, "and our bags the losers. But at any rate you will join us after luncheon?"

"Certainly, if I can," assented the Captain, and a minute or two later, quietly left the room.

"Do you believe in those letters, Jack?" said the Honourable Walter, in a low tone, to his friend. "I don't."

"Nor I," curtly replied Trevor.

When they at length adjourned to the drawing-room, Sybil, seated at the piano, and attended as usual by the inevitable Travers, was lightly fingering a dreamy melody of Schubert, which, on her uncle's appearance, she exchanged for his favourite hunting song, "John Peel." Old Lady Totterly was fast asleep in her arm-chair;

Mrs. Pemberton and Lady Hawbuck, who had been discussing every domestic grievance, from the iniquities of servants to the extortions of tradespeople, seemed mutually tired of each other; while the good-natured Ethel had just given up in despair the hopeless task of teaching Miss Blake bézique. Mrs. Beresford, ensconced in a low chair near the fire and looking unutterably bored, greeted the new comers effusively.

"I thought you had forgotten us altogether," she said to Trevor. "Don't spoil sport over there," she added, seeing his eye directed towards the piano, "but come and amuse me."

There was no help for it, and for the next quarter of an hour he found himself compelled to listen, more or less attentively, to an uninterrupted flow of small talk, until compassionately relieved from duty by Noland; who not only communicated to the delighted widow sundry piquant anecdotes, expressly stored up for country circulation, but supplied her, at her own request, with infallible "tips" for the autumn handicaps, which, had she profited by the information thus acquired, would have seriously compromised her income for the current year.

Even then Jack's star was not in the ascendant. At the earnest solicitation of the enthusiastic Broadacres, Miss Courtenay was induced to remain at the piano, until her stock of hunting songs was exhausted, winding up with Whyte Melville's popular melody, "Drink, puppy, drink." She had hardly risen from her chair when the arrival of Gilson with the chamber candles occasioned a general move; and the by no means easy task of arousing Lady Totterly from her slumbers and escorting her upstairs having been accomplished, the remaining feminine contingent speedily vanished, Trevor's chance of exchanging a word with Sybil beyond a formal "good-night" being indefinitely postponed.

"You know your way to my den, Noland," said the Admiral, taking up his candlestick. "Hawbuck and I don't smoke, but there are plenty of cigars for those who do. Broadacres, I know, likes his weed before going to roost."

"Not to-night, thanks," replied the young man. "I've smoked a lot to-day, and mean to keep my hand steady for the home copse to-morrow."

Travers having likewise declined joining them on the plea of a sudden headache, our two friends were soon comfortably installed in their host's own particular snuggery and smoking-room.

"Tell you what it is, Jack," said the Honourable Walter, when he had selected a cigar from a box on the table, and tested its quality by a few probationary whiffs, "that fellow Travers means business; I've watched him pretty closely, and if he doesn't ask Miss Sybil a question before he is four-and-twenty hours older, 'write me down an ass,' as the chap says in the play."

"I can't help it if he does," moodily replied Jack. "What right

have I to complain? I have never told her I loved her, never given her the slightest reason to suspect——"

"If your tongue hasn't, your eyes have," coolly interrupted Long Odds, "and whatever defects the young lady may be afflicted with, blindness isn't one of them. So cheer up; it's not all plain sailing between the start and the finish, and a race is never lost till it's won."

It was impossible to resist such good-humoured philosophy, and when the pair separated for the night, Trevor felt half disposed to admit, in his companion's peculiar phraseology, that "the horse which gets off first doesn't always catch the judge's eye."

After an early breakfast the Admiral and his guests, with the exception of Travers, started off for a long day's work in the home copse, and found their anticipations of excellent sport most satisfactorily verified. In less than three hours the bags were filled to overflowing, and by the time the last cartridge had been expended, the quantity of pheasants, hares and rabbits lying about in the vicinity of the "warm" corner would have sufficed to stock the Leicester market for at least a week. A large proportion of these had fallen to the Honourable Walter's gun, and he was consequently in high spirits on returning to the house a little in advance of the others.

"Any more people coming to dinner to-day?" he asked the butler, who was putting the finishing touch to the tea-table in the hall.

"No, sir," replied Gilson, "one less; Captain Travers is gone, sir."

"Gone! Where to?"

"Town, sir, I believe. Said he'd had a telegram, but no one seems to know who brought it. Anyhow, that's what the Captain said, sir."

"Bowled out!" muttered Noland to himself. "Did you hear that, Jack?" he said aloud, as his friend appeared in the doorway.

"Hear what?"

"That Travers has bolted!"

"By Jove!"

It is quite conceivable, his peculiar temperament taken into consideration, that Trevor, although greatly relieved by his rival's departure, should on that very account have felt by no means exempt from apprehension on his own score. Nevertheless, taking advantage of a moment when Sybil and he were alone in the course of the evening, he summoned up courage to solicit an interview with her on the following day, to which she at once acceded without any apparent surprise, saying that he would find her at half-past twelve in the morning-room. At that hour, he reflected, there was little risk of their being interrupted: the Hawbucks had settled to leave by an early train for the North, the two old ladies never appeared before luncheon, and Mrs. Pemberton, after speeding the parting guests,

would inevitably, according to custom, devote the rest of the morning to what she called her household duties. As for Mrs. Beresford and Ethel, they had arranged to join the shooters at an improvised pic-nic in the woods, and were to inspect the newly-opened school-room in the village on their way thither.

Nothing material occurred to upset Jack's calculations; and as he had anticipated, before twelve o'clock had struck the coast was clear. As the eventful moment which was to decide his fate drew nigh, his nervous embarrassment increased in so painful a degree that when at length he found himself *tête-à-tête* with Miss Courtenay, ostensibly occupied with a piece of intricate embroidery, he could not for the life of him hit upon a more appropriate "entrée en matière" than that it was a fine day for the time of year.

"Very," gravely replied the young lady; and a pause ensued, which might have lasted indefinitely had not Sybil, with a smile half-compassionate, half-mischievous, suddenly broken new ground by asking her bewildered admirer if he ever studied the almanac.

"The almanac!" he stammered, utterly taken aback by the question; "no, I can't say I do."

"That's a pity," she observed; "a great deal of interesting information may be found there. For instance——"

The idea that she was amusing herself at his expense at once restored Trevor's self-possession.

"I didn't come here to talk about almanacs," he interrupted her, in a slightly reproachful tone, "but to solicit—presumptuously perhaps—a boon more precious to me than anything the world could offer. Sybil, dearest Sybil," he continued, in a voice trembling with suppressed emotion, and tenderly clasping her unresisting hand, "will you be my wife?"

"I will, John," she replied frankly; "and you might have known it long ago if you had asked me. As it is, you have spared me a delicate task. According to the almanac——"

"Bother the almanac," cried Jack, impatiently; "what can it have to do with us?"

"More than you imagine. If you had studied it attentively you might have discovered that in this year of grace 'February's days are twenty-nine,' and therefore——"

"I see!" exclaimed her lover in a transport of delight, pressing the little hand he held closer to his heart.

"Let me finish," persisted Sybil, with a most becoming blush. "And, therefore, when a gentleman won't speak out, it is, we are told, permissible for a lady—in certain exceptional cases, of course—to avail herself of an incontestable privilege of her sex—the privilege of 'Leap Year!'"

CHARLES HERVEY.

SPRING-TIME MEMORIES.

THE winter is o'er and the dawning
Of spring tells us summer is nigh,
Yon zephyr-like clouds seem an awning
Just spread 'tween the earth and the sky,
To hold back the wonderful glory
That waits to be poured overhead;
Proclaiming anew the glad story
Of God bringing life from the dead.

Come, loved one, arise, let us wander
Far, far from the city to-day,
In careless forgetfulness squander
The hours, like children at play;
Let us put aside sorrow and sadness,
Our hearts have been bowed in the past;
Sweet spring has brought back life and gladness,
And a hope that is ever to last.

She comes, with the promise God-given,
She comes with her soft, balmy breath,
The life-giving angel of heaven,
Awaking all nature from death.
The snowdrops are out in the border,
The crocuses shining in gold,
The blue-bonnets come in their order,
With a thousand sweet flowers untold.

Ah! pleasure and pain, how you mingle
When we tune recollection's old harp,
My head, heart and hands, how they tingle
With memories pleasant and sharp.
I see you once more in a glory
Of bluebells and violets sweet,
The hawthorn is blossoming o'er you,
And I sitting low at your feet.

The primroses clustered around us,
'Mongst moss by that brightest of rills,
The drooping anemone found us
When we lifted our eyes to the hills;
Dear scenes of enchantment, ah, never
Shall time from this bosom efface
These gifts of the bounteous giver
Who clothes our earth with such grace.

Oh, spring time has wonderful beauty
When God says to nature, "Come forth!"
She blossoms, obedient to duty,
And gone are the winds of the north!
And thou, oh, chill death, our bereaver,
Vaunt not! so triumphantly brave,
He will call forth each waiting believer
From the silence and sleep of the grave.

M. W. S.

M. ELLEN STAPLES. R. TAYLOR.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1890.

THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IX.

CHELSON.

THE shadow of changes was coming over Seaford. Mr. Coomes fell ill, and died; and Mr. Halliwell was only performing the duty in the interregnum that occurred between the appointing of another incumbent. Alfred had been very well liked during the time that he had filled the office of curate at Seaford, and the parishioners were in hopes that whoever was appointed to the living would keep him on. Failing anything better, he would have been glad of it himself, but an influential man, a friend of the late Major Halliwell's, had promised to interest himself in a certain quarter, and try and obtain for him an incumbency.

Hester was outgrowing her sorrow; but it was a work of time. Her dreams, and perhaps her waking thoughts, would sometimes present confused images of a muddy river, into which a desperate man had leaped and sunk. The random words of the Swiss governess induced this. The Seafords, after the second winter there, left the castle, and went abroad, and no tidings whatever had been heard of George Archer.

In spite of Hester's silence, and absence of all allusion to the subject, Mrs. Halliwell saw that a change of scene would be beneficial to her, and she sent her to spend this summer at Middlebury with Mr. and Mrs. Halliwell: many a pleasant month had Hester spent there in her youth. She did not return until September, and the first news that greeted her was that Alfred was appointed to a living in Chelson, and had just departed for it. It was but a poor appointment. The living was set down as worth £170 per annum, but the net income scarcely realised £140. Alfred sent them word that Chelson was a pretty place, and its inhabitants showed him much kindness and hospitality.

Again the winter went on, and the spring, monotonously enough.

An Indian letter, now and then, from Mrs. Pepper, and a flying visit from Aunt Copp, were the only variations. Mrs. Halliwell, Hester and Lucy were alone, Mary being then at a finishing school. The new Vicar, Mr. Williams, was a young man, and they became very intimate with his wife.

One day in the late spring, Mrs. Halliwell, who was reading a letter just received from Alfred, appeared to fall into a reverie, now musing, now referring to the letter.

"What are you puzzled about, mamma?" asked Lucy.

"I am not puzzled, child, but I was thinking."

"Of what?"

"That it is unkind of us, as Alfred says, to suffer him to be there so long alone."

"When Alfred left, you promised him that you would go yourself, mamma," returned Lucy.

"Ay," she answered, in a somewhat curious tone, "I did say so, but I must visit by deputy. Children, I think you must have noticed that I am breaking fast."

"Breaking, mamma!" almost merrily exclaimed Lucy; "you are only two or three and fifty. People don't break till they are seventy."

"Painful disorders—and incurable—come on at all ages, Lucy."

"But you have none," was Lucy's answer. "You look as well as ever, and your colour is as bright." Hester, however, sat in awe-struck silence, looking at her mother.

"My dears," said Mrs. Halliwell, "I am not well. I have known it some time."

Hester rose and approached her mother. "Dearest mamma," she said, in low tones, which she compelled to calmness, "if you have reason to suspect that anything is the matter with you, let us know it. What," she added, in a quicker tone, as a recollection suddenly came over her, "what did Mr. Davis want here yesterday? Was it only a call? I thought it was."

"I sent privately for him, Hester," returned Mrs. Halliwell.

"Oh, mamma!" interrupted Lucy, bursting into tears, for she was very excitable, "tell us what it is."

"If you will not be foolish, I will tell you. Indeed it is nothing to be alarmed at. I may live many years. Hester, you are looking frightened also. I did not mean to alarm you, only to give you a reason for my not going out visiting. I suppose I have introduced my subject too abruptly."

"Mamma," said Hester, but very quietly, "you are keeping us in suspense."

"Children, I have heart complaint. I have long thought that this fluttering which comes on, and this difficulty of breathing, with other symptoms, must have something to do with the heart. I sent yesterday for Mr. Davis, and he confirms my opinion."

"There are many sorts of heart disease," breathed Hester. "Which ——"

"He called it dilatation of the heart," interrupted Mrs. Halliwell, "combined with another long word which I really cannot remember. Hyper—something—it began."

"Did Mr. Davis say there was any danger?"

"No immediate danger whatever. I may live, as I told you, many years. It will, however, no doubt, be my death at last."

In spite of her self-control, Hester burst into tears. "Oh, mother! you have taken away all the happiness that was left to me."

"Hester! do not speak like that. See how calm I am. My dear children, if we are to be thus afflicted at the mention of death, how shall we be fit to meet it when it comes? Have you both profited so little by your childhood's hymn?"

"What hymn?" sobbed Lucy.

"'Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed.'

"My darling children, until we acquire this peace within us, it is impossible that we can be happy. I trust it is mine: let that console you. In time I pray that it may be yours."

"What did Mr. Davis say?" asked Hester.

"He only confirmed my own suspicions, and detailed the nature of the disease. I must live an absolutely quiet life, very abstemious and regular; and for other remedies that may be requisite, he will order them, as occasion shall arise. There was no reason, he assured me, why I should not make an old woman yet, provided I took care of myself. But now you see," she added, smiling, "why I may not go galloping over the country to pay visits, as you young ones may."

"Mamma," said Hester, "if you could get yourself removed quietly, by easy stages, to Chelson, the change might benefit you."

"No, my dear, it would be sure to do me harm, let me travel as quietly as I would. My going from home is out of the question; so it must be one of you. Now which shall it be?"

"Lucy, of course," observed Hester.

"Hester, not me," said Lucy. "I would not leave you, mamma."

They had both spoken at once, and a friendly dispute ensued. Neither would leave Mrs. Halliwell; and she sat and laughed at them. The knowledge of her state did not seem to affect her spirits in the least. "I think you must let me decide," she interposed at length.

"You had better, mamma. If one of us must really go."

"Then I say Hester," rejoined Mrs. Halliwell. "Alfred is so incapable of anything like domestic management, that I daresay his house and its affairs—what is the French word for it, Lucy? we have no good one—have never been set going, in proper order, yet. And,

as Hester excels in these things, and you do not, Lucy, she had better go."

Thus it was decided. And the last week in May Hester quitted Seaford for Chelson.

There was no rail to the place in those days, only three stage coaches, and she started by the early one. The glistening dew was still on the fields, the birds were singing, the hedge flowers opening, and the various points of the landscape, as they drove on, stood out, clear and lovely, against the morning sky. Her fellow passengers were two pleasant, elderly ladies, who pressed egg sandwiches upon her. She asked if they knew Chelson. Yes, they answered, they lived within a few miles of it: it was a pretty place, containing a good many Dissenters.

"There are two churches," Hester eagerly observed: "St. Stephen's and St. Paul's."

"But they have been so badly managed that a great many have seceded from them to become Dissenters," one of the ladies replied. "There's some rare fun going on at Chelson just now, though; as we heard a few days ago in a letter."

"What is it?" inquired Hester.

"They have a new clergyman at one of the churches, I forget which, and the ladies are turning his head with attention and flattery. It is a hot pursuit with them; Chelson has not been so lively for years. It is sure to be the case where there is a bachelor clergyman."

Hester wondered whether they could be speaking of Alfred. But she thought not: he had too much steady good sense for anything of this sort.

At four o'clock she reached Chelson, and was surprised to find no one waiting for her at the coach-office. A porter took charge of her luggage, and showed her the way to the vicarage. The church, an old grey building, covered with moss, lay very low, a descent of several steps led to the churchyard, and the vicarage was contiguous to it, the long dank grass touching the walls of the house. The porter halted his truck at the steps, and shouldered one of the boxes, whilst Hester went down them, crossed the churchyard, and knocked at the vicarage door.

"If this house is not damp," began Hester to herself, but stopped in surprise, for at least a dozen heads appeared at one of the windows, peeping at her. She thought the porter had made a mistake.

"Are you sure this is St. Stephen's Vicarage? The Reverend Alfred Halliwell's?" she hastily asked.

"Oh, quite sure, miss," he replied, smiling at her idea of his being mistaken; and probably following the bent of her thoughts, for he added: "I think the new Vicar have got his sewing-party to-day."

"Sewing-party!" uttered Hester.

"The ladies meets at his house once a week, miss, and makes clothes for the poor."

The door was flung open by a middle-aged woman in black, with spectacles on her nose, and grey hair sticking out. Mr. Halliwell appeared behind her. And then Hester found there had been a mistake, either in her mother's wording of her letter, or in his reading of it, for he had not expected her till the evening coach at nine o'clock.

The luggage was put in the passage, a very narrow one, and then Mr. Halliwell introduced her to the parlour. Fifteen or sixteen ladies, of various ages, up to five-and-thirty, sat round a table, which was piled up with calico, flannel and coloured prints. "My eldest sister," said he. "Mrs. Zink, Miss Dewisson, Miss ——— "

Hester heard no more. She thought she should have been smothered. The whole bevy started up, and fell upon her. She had a great dislike to being kissed, but what was she to do? Mrs. Zink, a stout lady, rising fifty, the wife of a professional man in Chelson, was the only married lady present. She offered to chaperone Hester upstairs, and Alfred thanked her.

It was a poor, old-fashioned house, containing five rooms besides the kitchen, which was built at the back. The ceilings were miserably low: Hester could touch the beams with her hand. There were two parlours, one on either side the door; two bedrooms over, Mr. Halliwell's, and the one meant for Hester; and one room above, in what Hester would have called the roof, but which she there heard styled the "cock-loft."

"What a number of bonnets!" exclaimed Hester, when she came in view of her bed.

"My dear Miss Halliwell, I hope you will excuse it," said Mrs. Zink—it struck Hester as being the oddest name she had ever heard. "We have been in the habit of putting our things here, on the Tuesday afternoons, and although the room was made ready for you, we did the same to-day. Indeed there was no other place. The second parlour has the tea laid out in it, and of course the young ladies would rather be skinned than invade the privacy of the Vicar's bedroom. Did you wonder at seeing so many here, all at work?"

"A little, at first," answered Hester.

"Ah! your dear brother has had the labour of a horse before him. The parish was in the most neglected state when he came to it; religion and morality were not thought of amongst the poor, and the children were a race of heathens. What Mr. Halliwell would have done without us, I don't know. We have organised everything for him: schools and book-clubs, and district-visiting ladies, and coal-and-provident meetings, and sewing-for-the-poor societies, and all else requisite, so that he really has no trouble, except his Sunday duties."

"But—pardon me—if the lady-parishioners are so very kind as to

accomplish this good, of themselves, why could they not have done it in the time of the last Vicar, or at least have prevented things from getting as you describe?"

"My dear Miss Halliwell, there must be a head: your brother has to be referred to on all occasions. In any little doubt or difficulty we fly to him, and indeed we never like to hold a meeting unless he is present. Now, Mr. Clarke, the last Vicar (a very good old soul, in the abstract), was as deaf as a post and a martyr to rheumatism. There would have been no satisfaction in working for him. For the last five years of his life he had to be dragged into church by Betty and the beadle, and did all the duty from the reading-desk."

"Is my brother liked here?" Hester ventured to inquire.

"Liked! he is adored," returned Mrs. Zink. "And the greatest pleasure we enjoy is looking after his domestic comforts. He seems to have as much notion of home-management as the curate at the other church has of preaching."

"He was always deficient in that sort of usefulness," remarked Hester. "I think clergymen frequently are."

"Ah, poor things!" aspirated Mrs. Zink; "these inexperienced saints of clergymen are like doves, pecked at by every raven that comes near them, in the shape of tradespeople and servants. And they fall into snares so unsuspiciously! Would you believe that your brother was actually going to retain the late Vicar's female servant?"

"Indeed," answered Hester, not quite knowing what she might be expected to say.

"To be sure she is no beauty, and she is turned five-and-forty," went on Mrs. Zink. "It is Betty, the woman who opened the door for you, the sexton's sister. He could not understand why she would not do for him, as she had done for the late Vicar. But I, and Mrs. Farley, and Mrs. Dewisson, and Mrs. Hook, and a few more, stepped privately up here, and pointed out to Mr. Halliwell that there was a wide difference between old Clarke, going on for eighty and no teeth, and a handsome young man like himself. There certainly *might* not have been any scandal talked in the parish, and I shall never forget the unsuspicious young Vicar's astonished looks at our hinting that it was possible; but we told him that it was better to steer wide and clear, and give it a distant berth. So, until now, nobody has lived in the house with him but the sexton's son Jim, an extremely handy young man of one-and-twenty."

"Then has my brother no maid-servant?" inquired Hester, wondering where Mrs. Zink's communications would end.

"He has taken her on now, in expectation of your arrival: she came in yesterday. A sight of dirt, she has just told me, she found to clean up in the house, especially in Jim's bedroom in the cock-loft."

"I fear it must have been rather awkward, both for my brother and the young man, to contrive for themselves without a woman-ser-

vant," said Hester, not agreeing in the least with the nonsense Mrs. Zink had been talking.

"We have all been proud to do what we could for our dear pastor. When he is dining at home we send him in some little dainty—a custard pudding, or a plate of macaroni, or some raspberry cream—for Jim's skill in cooking only extends to chops and potatoes. But it is but rarely he puts Jim's cooking to the test; he is constantly invited out, to one parishioner's or another; they quarrel who shall have him. *I* secured him for the Sunday," added Mrs. Zink triumphantly. "I knew how it would be, the instant I set eyes on him—that every soul would be wanting to snap him up. So I made hay while the sun shone, and engaged him for every Sunday in the year, all the fifty-two, for dinner and tea. Now, Fanny! what do you want?"

A pleasant-looking girl had entered, humming a tune. She was Mrs. Zink in miniature, very garrulous and positive.

"Tea is ready, mamma; and Mr. Halliwell says will you come and make it?"

Mrs. Zink turned to Hester. "We are having tea early, but it refreshes us. Shall I preside for you this evening, or would you prefer ——"

"Oh, if you please, I would much rather you did it," interrupted Hester. "They are all strange to me."

"Then I'll go on. Fanny, have you finished that pinafore?"

"No, mamma," answered Fanny, with a gesture of impatience. "I have turned it over to Matilda; she will do that and her own work too."

"The most easy job I could find, all straight sewing, and you give it up!" cried Mrs. Zink, angrily. "I don't know what is to become of you, Fanny. It is a blessing that Matilda is domesticated and industrious."

"Is she, though?" ejaculated Miss Fanny Zink, in a whisper, nodding her head after her mother, as the latter went downstairs. "Do you like plain sewing, Miss Halliwell?"

"I like it very well," was Hester's reply, "and often have a good deal to do."

"Well, I would as soon be put in the pillory. Mamma brings me here, on the Tuesday afternoons, and I enjoy coming, myself, for the fun of it, but I don't do a stitch more than I can avoid. I call it a most detestable mania that they have got up, since the new Vicar came."

"If you so much dislike work, you should leave it for those who are fond of it," smiled Hester.

"None of them are. It's all put on. And if it were not for—something—they would not do any. Look at Matilda: she would not touch a needle at home, if she were paid, though she does come here, and sit, nose to knees, for hours, without stirring. I can't, so it's of no use pretending."

Hester had made herself ready by this time, and they went down to the parlour. Not the one where the sewing was. A very handsome tea was set out, Mrs. Zink presiding. The cups and saucers were blue and gold, and a small fringed damask napkin was on each plate. Bread-and-butter, rolls, biscuits, watercress, radishes, marmalade, potted tongue, damson cheese, and a pint jug of cream. Hester saw it with astonishment: if her brother had thought to provide the one half of this, his housekeeping talents must have wonderfully improved.

What they seemed to want most was room. And how the chairs for eighteen were stowed into that little parlour must ever be a mystery. Not many could sit round the table; the rest put their chairs where they could, face to face, or back to back, as they would go in, and held their plates on their laps. When Betty or Jim came in with fresh supplies of hot water, it was taken from them at the door, for there was no getting inside. Jim seemed to enjoy the party as much as anyone; there was a good-humoured laugh on his face, which never left it. He was a simple-minded young man, very anxious to please, and in bodily fear of his aunt, Betty. But to see the attentions lavished by the ladies upon their minister! "Mr. Halliwell, let me give you a little marmalade. I know it is good, for I made it with my own hands." "Oh, Mr. Halliwell, allow me to spread it for you." "Dear Mr. Halliwell, do taste the potted tongue! Now I superintended it myself, and there's just the flavour of spice you like." "Mr. Halliwell, I am peeling this radish for you, and you must eat it. I will answer for their being fresh, for I pulled them out of our own garden." "Just look, Mr. Halliwell, what a beautiful piece of damson cheese! I have cut it for you. Mamma prides herself upon her damson cheese, and I always assist with it." "My dear, good Mr. Halliwell, I beg your pardon! I did not perceive your cup was empty. Permit me to pass it." And this kept on all tea-time, so that by the time it was over, the Reverend Alfred Halliwell, who was naturally diffident, had a face as red as the radishes.

They turned to the sewing again afterwards, and left about half-past eight o'clock, he going with them. Hester then went into the kitchen, and asked Betty for a candle, thinking she would have a look round her brother's bedroom, and see if things were comfortable for him.

"My goodness!" she uttered, when she found herself there. She had never witnessed such a room: the state it was in would have turned her mother crazy. Mrs. Halliwell used to reproach Alfred with never keeping his drawers straight: she should have seen these, inside and out.

"Ah, miss, you may well stare," said Betty, who had followed. "When I first see this room yesterday, I heaved up my hands and eyes. And when I spoke to master about it, he looked round as if he see it then for the first time. But he did say that he never could

find his things when he wanted them. Wouldn't I like to have the shaking of that Jim!"

"My brother never does see anything but his books and pens," said Hester. "What are all these rolled up here?"

"Clean shirts which have got the buttons off," responded Betty. "It have been master's plan, I hear, when he have put on a shirt and found a button gone, to tug it off again and cram it, anyways, into the drawers, or toss it on the top, so that I b'lieve he have not got above a couple of shirts to wear. As if that Jim could not have folded them up after him; and sewed the buttons on too, if he liked, the proud monkey! Them are stockings, miss, and they have no fellows that I can see, and there ain't one in the whole stock but have nine or ten holes in it as big as half-a-crown."

"They will never mend!" exclaimed Hester, looking at stocking after stocking in dismay.

"Not to much account," answered Betty. "Mr. Jim ought to be made to pay for new ones. He might have bought some darning-cotton and a needle, and caught up the holes, not have let 'em go on to this. I took a pair down yesterday, after master went out to dinner at five, and when he come home at half after ten I hadn't got through the first. And oh, miss, you should have seen Jim's room in the cock-loft. He had been a cutting up of wood in it, and never cleared up the chips, and drops of taller was splashed on the boards, and a hole burnt in one corner of the sheet. I'd put Master Jim in a press-gang for two months and make him work, if I had my will."

"Where did this come from?" inquired Hester, espying a handsome white satin pin-cushion on the dressing-table. "And what pretty scent bottles!"

"They come from one or another of 'em," replied Betty. "I daresay Jim knows which. It have been as good as a theatre-play to him."

"From one or another of what?" repeated Hester, not understanding.

"From the young ladies what's after master. The house is full of their presents. You just wait till to-morrow morning, miss, you'll see something then. Why, miss, there ain't one of that sixteen what was here to-night but is ready to rush into his arms, whether he'll open them or not. All them niceties you saw on the table for tea was brought here by one or t'other: pretending, to master, that they had made the jams and things themselves, that he might get thinking what a useful wife they'd make him. The cups and saucers was lent by Mrs. Zink—she's a deep one, she is—and them fringed cloths on the plates was give by Mrs. Dove. When they first got up these sewing-parties they held 'em at their own houses, by turns. And what made 'em propose to hold 'em at the vicarage? Why, because master should be present, for that's all they care for, not for the sewing or the poor; and they couldn't for shame ask him to a

stitching-meeting. The mothers be more cunning than the daughters, and that's a fact. I wonder master ain't druv clean off his head with the two. Here comes master! he is soon home to-night."

Hester quitted the room with Betty, leaving it as it was until morning. "Where do you sleep?" she inquired.

"Up there, miss, in the cock-loft."

"I thought that was Jim's room."

"Jim left when I came in, miss. He is to come, of a day, to fetch and carry messages. The notes master has to send the ladies, in answer to their'n, is enough to exercise Jim's legs."

When Hester made her appearance in the parlour the following morning, she wondered what in the world had come to it. The back of every chair was decorated off with a white netted covering. And not only the chairs, but the ends of the little sofa, and also the two stools, which were not of common horsehair, like the rest of the furniture, but elegant pieces of embroidery in floss silks. She had never met with these white things before; they have become universal since, but her opinion is that Chelson gave rise to the fashion, for she saw none anywhere else for years afterwards.

"I knew you would be dazed, miss," cried Betty in triumph. "I had got 'em in the wash-tub yesterday. They was pretty black when I came, for this room smokes like anything, and I sat up to dry and finish 'em after you went to bed."

"What do you call them? What are they for?" asked Hester, pleased with the novel sight.

"Well, miss, they ain't of no use, they are for ornament; they gets tumbled, and they gets on the floor, and the cotton fluff from 'em gets on to the gentlemen's clothes. I calls 'em chair-sacks, but that ain't the quality name. There's a set for master's bedroom, which haven't been put on yet; and Jim did hear, miss," added Betty, dropping her voice to a mysterious whisper, "that the ladies was a consulting whether they might not do some to put on the pulpit cushions."

Hester was admiring them still, for they gave a light, pretty appearance to the low, dark room and its plain furniture, when her brother entered. "How gay you are, Alfred!" she said.

"Gay! Oh, with these anti-macassars. A senseless name for them, insinuating that we all use hair-oil."

"Who made them?"

"Miss—let me see—Miss Dewisson, I think it was, made this set."

"Betty says there are some for your bedroom."

"Yes. Emma Farley made those. You had better put them in yours. I have not used them."

"And who worked you these foot-stools, Alfred?"

"Oh, that was a joint-stock affair, I believe. Five or six joined, and presented them."

The vicarage was inundated that day with callers, so that its inmates could hardly snatch their early dinner. The visits were

ostensibly to Hester, but she thought they were really meant for Alfred. One of them, Miss Butler, who came with her aunt, left a thin parcel of tissue paper in Mr. Halliwell's hands, expressing a hope that he would find the contents useful. He opened it as soon as she was gone.

"Look here, Hester! Do you think I can wear these?"

It was a pair of fine bands, hem-stitched and trimmed round with a sort of lace, very narrow, the work of the hand.

"Of course you cannot wear them," was Hester's astonished reply. "I never heard of any bands but plain ones being worn. What possesses all the ladies you have come amongst?"

Mr. Halliwell laughed. "I never met with so good-natured a set as these Chelson people. Hester, I do think I might wear these; I do not like to appear ungrateful."

"You cannot wear the bands," peremptorily returned Hester. "Don't talk nonsense. I wish my mother could have come here instead of me."

"Why so?"

"Because, Alfred, you are running into danger, and need warning counsel. When a parcel of women can beset a clergyman, because he happens to be unmarried, as these Chelson people are besetting you, my opinion is that they possess neither judgment nor modesty. And I am sure they have no religion."

"Hester, I strive to do right—to adhere to the line of duty."

"I believe you wish to do so, Alfred. But they are rendering it difficult."

On the following Sunday morning, as Hester was passing upstairs to get ready for church, her brother's door stood open, and she espied these identical bands laid out on his dressing-table, side by side with a pair of plain ones. Hester felt grievously vexed, for it convinced her he was debating with himself whether he should wear them. She darted in, seized them on the spur of the moment, flew quietly down the stairs, popped them into Betty's kitchen fire, and flew back again. Presently he came up and went into his chamber: he had been preparing the bread for the Sacrament, for it was the first Sunday in June.

"Hester," he called out, "have you taken those bands of Miss Butler's?"

"I taken them!" she answered, frightened to death; "what should bring me with them? It is more than half-past ten, Alfred. Make haste."

"Did you think the wind was very high this morning?" he presently asked again.

Hester sat down to laugh, and thought she should have choked. He imagined they had blown out at the window. "Oh, very high," responded Hester, when she could speak. "Don't you see the poplars blowing about?"

Mr. Halliwell said no more, and they went to church, he of course in the plain bands. The church was very full: in the late Vicar's time the pews had used to be empty: but (to go to no less legitimate considerations) Alfred Halliwell was a superior reader, and preached practical, excellent sermons. Hester was surprised to see so many young ladies remain for the Sacrament. Nearly every one in the church stayed, and it struck her that she had never before seen so many juvenile communicants.

But when she drew near the table and saw what was on it, her heart stood still and a film gathered before her eyes. There were a couple of lace handkerchiefs, one over the chalice, the other over the plate that contained the bread, or the alms just collected, she was not sure which. Her brother might *call* them napkins of fair white linen, but they were neither more nor less than worked handkerchiefs: the middle of silky, transparent cambric, and the border, four inches broad, of exquisite lace-work.

Those pieces of lace-work struck upon Hester's heart as being essentially wrong: not in themselves, but as applied to such a purpose. It was impossible not to have the eye diverted by the beauty of the embroidery; it was next to impossible to keep the mind from reverting to the unworthy motives which had induced the labour and the present to the young bachelor clergyman.

"Who worked—*those?*" she asked as they were walking home across the churchyard.

"Augusta Dove." He knew at once to what she alluded. "That young lady in blue, two pews to the left of you."

"Alfred, it is wrong; they ought not to be displayed there."

"I thought so at first. But the ladies were so pertinacious over it, persuading me there could be no possible harm in an innocent piece of industry. So I yielded."

"I wonder where this will end?" sighed Hester. "It seems to me that you run, blindfold, to meet them half way."

The Reverend Mr. Halliwell remained silent. Perhaps his conscience smote him. Or he may have felt that he had irrevocably fallen into the meshes of the Chelson maids and matrons, and was powerless to extricate himself.

CHAPTER X.

MISS ZINK'S HYSTERICS.

THERE seemed to Hester to be no end of work in the parish; much more than there need have been, to bring forth so little result. A treat was in agitation for the Sunday school children, and a dozen meetings were held to consult about it, Mr. Halliwell in the chair, and the ladies round. Meanwhile, he and Hester were invited to a grand evening party at Mrs. Zink's. But when the evening came Hester had to go alone, for he was called out to a sick parishioner.

They were up in arms when she entered by herself—the whole room. Oh, where was Mr. Halliwell? What was the matter? Was Mr. Halliwell not coming?

"Who is it that has sent for him?" inquired Mrs. Zink, when Hester explained.

"Sally Davis, I think Jim said," she answered.

"There! that old creature is always being taken ill!" uttered Mrs. Zink. "Do you remember, at the Jones's party in the Christmas week, when we were all so comfortable, dancing a quiet quadrille on the carpet, a message came from Sally Davis that she feared she should not live till morning, and dear Mr. Halliwell was forced to go to Back Lane, through all the cold, in his thin shoes? She is never contented but when she is having prayers read to her. They ought to put her in the workhouse."

"I hope my brother will never feel his duties irksome," Hester ventured to observe; "and I think he will not."

Just then a young gentleman swung into the room with a discontented air, and dropped into a vacant chair next to Hester. "I say," he whispered to her, "is not this precious slow?"

"Do you think so?" she politely replied.

"What has taken the parson, that he is not here yet? Do you know?"

"Mr. Halliwell has been called out to someone who is ill," said Hester. "He may not be able to come at all."

"My! you don't mean that! Won't they be savage! That serves ma right, for not letting me go boating. Because some of us fellows upset a skiff the other day, and got a ducking, she swore I should never go near the water again. We had made up a jolly rowing party for this evening, and when I was stealing off to it, she pounced upon me in the hall, and we had a regular quarrel. I told her I would go, so she laid hold of me, and hallooed out for the governor, who came out of the office and put in his word, and they made me dress and come in here."

"Are you Master Zink?"

"I am Mister Zink, if you please," returned the young gentleman. "When a fellow's going on for seventeen, I should think that's old enough to be Mister. I say, though, isn't it a game about the parson? They have been mad over this blow-out: trying on dresses, figuring off before the glass, practising songs: all for him. And now he doesn't show. By Jove! if it's not good! There's more fuss made with that parson than with all Chelson."

"Who is that?" inquired Hester, thinking it might be well to turn the conversation, and directing his attention to a quiet-looking girl in lilac muslin.

"That! That's Mab."

"Who, sir?"

"Mabel Zink, my sister. The missis" (Mister Zink's familiar

name for his mother) "keeps her in the background, till Mat and Fan are got off. I say, how old should you think Mat is?"

"I heard your mamma say that Miss Zink was turned twenty."

"And a jolly long turn, too. She was twenty-seven last birthday, and Fan's going on for twenty-five. Why, Mabel's twenty!"

"But don't you think we might talk about something else?" interposed Hester. "Your sisters may not like to have their ages discussed."

"They can lump it. Mat and Fan magged out as loud as the missis against my going boating, but I said if they made me come in here I'd spoil sport. They fight and scratch each other after the new parson: metaphorically, you know, but they'd like to do it in earnest, if it could be kept from his ears. The missis favours Matilda, because she's the eldest, and it is her turn to go off first, but he may have the pick of the two, I can tell you."

"Are you fond of singing?" questioned Hester, hoping that might divert the young gentleman.

"Yes, I am, over the left," retorted Mister Zink. "I get rather too much of it for that. Mat and Fan are squalling against time from morning till night, since they found out the parson had a voice. I told them to-day that if they thought to hook him by noise, they might find themselves in the wrong box, for which I had to make a bolt. I wish he had never come near the place, I do."

"I am sorry he should be so unfortunate as to have displeased you."

"It is so naggering, you see," proceeded Mister Zink. "A fellow was left free as a hare before, but deuce a bit of that now. One halloos out, 'Tray, go and change those dirty boots: Mr. Halliwell's coming to tea.' Then the other screams, 'Tray, for goodness' sake go and make yourself decent! what an object you are! your head's like a mop! we expect Mr. Halliwell.' Last night we had a sharp dispute over it. I wanted Tom Fisher in: they said rude chaps like Tom Fisher were not society for the parson, and wouldn't let him come. So I walked myself out, and never came in till half-past eleven, and got a rowing from the missis and the governor. And one dare not leave as much as a flea in the drawing-room. I put a fishing-rod in the corner the other day, and they squealed after me as if it had been a serpent: 'Now, Tray, don't bring these things here! we can't have this room made into a litter; Mr. Halliwell may be calling.' I thought a parson was a peaceable man. I should be ashamed, if I were one, to cause the rumpus in a house that he does in this."

"But, really," urged Hester, "it appears to me that the 'rumpus' is not his fault."

"Well, I know I'm sick of it, and I wish he would marry one of the girls, and put a stop to the humbugging. I shouldn't care whether it was one of my sisters or anybody else's—though precious

glad I should be for those two eldest to cut it, out of here. Shall you try for him, now you are come?"

He put the question so quaintly, in a joke, as Hester supposed, that she could not forbear laughing.

"If you don't, you'll be an exception to everybody here. I'm sick of the idiots. I think Mab's making up to him, on the sly. And I suppose Amy would if she had the chance."

"Who is Amy?" questioned Hester.

"She's next to Fan, between her and Mabel. She lives at my old aunt's, and never comes to Chelson. The governor's aunt, you know; as cranky an old creature as ever was known. I wonder Amy can put up with her; but she ought to give thanks to be out of here, just now. There's the same row going on in the other houses over the parson that there is in this. Have you not twigged it at Mother Farley's?"

"I have not been to Mrs. Farley's yet," answered Hester.

"Not been—— Why, who do you mean to say you are, if you are not living there? Arn't you the little Farleys' new governess?"

"No, I am Mr. Halliwell's sister: staying at the vicarage."

"Oh, my eye!" exclaimed the young gentleman with emphasis, as he stared at Hester with a blank look of amazement. "Well, I have put my foot in it! I'll make myself scarce. Not that I care, ma'am, if you do tell the parson," he added, coming back again after springing from his seat. "The missis and the girls will believe me, for another time, that when I say I'll spoil sport, I mean to do it."

He crossed the room to his sister Mabel, telling her, no doubt, of his awkward mistake, for her face turned crimson as she glanced at Hester. Presently he commenced to drag her across the room towards Hester.

"Now, Tracy! now Mabel!" exclaimed Mrs. Zink, "what are you about?"

For answer, Master Tracy pushed his sister into the chair he had vacated by Hester, and in the bustle of this, Mr. Halliwell came in. He was rapturously received, and requested to "sit here," and "sit there," but he drew a chair near to his sister and Mabel.

"How is it you never come to the working parties?" he asked of the latter.

She blushed so prettily that she quite won Hester's heart. Indeed she seemed to do nothing else but blush, and glanced at Mr. Halliwell with her shy eyes. "Mamma thinks Matilda and Fanny enough to go—that I should only be in the way. And perhaps she is right, for I do not like work."

"You are very different from everyone else in Chelson," remarked Mr. Halliwell. "They like nothing so well."

"I like fancy-work," said Mabel.

"And music?" asked Hester.

"Oh, yes, and music. I like that better than anything. I wanted to make acquaintance with you before, Miss Halliwell, but they

would not give me the opportunity. I wish you would invite me to spend an evening all alone with you at the vicarage. Mamma and my sisters will never bring me of their own accord."

"Come to-morrow evening," interrupted Mr. Halliwell.

"Oh, if I might!" she uttered, clasping her hands with the prettiest expression of helplessness. "If you could but get leave for me, Miss Halliwell."

Music was introduced after tea. Nearly everyone in the room sang, except Hester and Mabel. Hester could not, and Mabel was not asked. When Hester requested permission for her to visit them the following evening, Mrs. Zink seemed inclined to substitute Matilda, but Hester pressed for Mabel.

Accordingly, the next afternoon, Mabel went to the vicarage. Hester was really charmed with her, she thought her a very nice girl, of simple, winning manners. They persuaded her to sing, though they had no instrument, and Hester was astonished at her voice. It was of rare quality, and had been well trained.

"The school treat is arranged at last," remarked Mr. Halliwell, in the course of the evening. "It is to be next Monday, in Clebbery Ground. The children will enjoy themselves in the open air so much more than in the confined schoolroom. Clebbery ——"

"Do not tell me about it," interrupted Mabel, in an earnest, almost an impassioned tone. "It will only make me long to go."

"But you will go, will you not?" said Mr. Halliwell.

Mabel shook her head. "I am not allowed to go out with Matilda and Fanny. It is hard to be put aside for them always, and I feel it.' She raised her charming blue eyes to his for one moment as she spoke, and when they dropped, their eyelashes were glistening with tears.

At eight o'clock a servant arrived for Miss Mabel. When she was ready the Vicar said he would walk with her.

"Oh, no, indeed, thank you, Mr. Halliwell," she returned, colouring crimson; "pray do not think of taking *me*."

"Why not?" he inquired.

"If it were anyone but me—of course—but they will say I have no right to monopolise your time or to give you trouble."

He laughed, and drew her arm through his, and Hester watched them across the churchyard, the maid following.

The next Monday rose delightfully, and amidst the many faces assembled in the schoolroom ready for the departure to Clebbery Ground (a rural spot at a convenient distance from Chelson, much used for pic-nics) Hester saw that of Mabel Zink.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Halliwell!" she whispered; "it is all owing to your message that I am here. Mr. Halliwell gave it to mamma, so she could not do otherwise than let me come."

Hester did not remember to have sent any message; but she thought it very kind of Alfred to beg for Mabel.

The younger children went in a large covered waggon with the provisions; the elder walked. As did all the visitors, a great number of them. They arrived there about twelve, amused themselves for an hour or two, and then had dinner. Afterwards they dispersed, some to one part of the grounds, some to another. Mrs. Zink took her station in a grotto, and went to sleep; Hester sat on the felled stump of a tree outside it, her memory wandering back to bygone years, years that for her never would return. Suddenly they were both startled: Mrs. Zink out of her sleep, and Hester out of her waking dreams, for Miss Zink came flying up in a state of excitement, darted into the grotto, sank down on the seat by her mother, and went into screaming hysterics.

"What in the name of fortune is it?" uttered the alarmed Mrs. Zink. "What has come to you, Matilda?"

The young lady made no answer, but shrieked and kicked so violently, that Mrs. Zink seized her by the head, and Hester caught hold of her feet.

"Have you been stung by anything?" asked the wondering Mrs. Zink.

"Yes, that's it," screamed Matilda.

"Whereabouts? Was it a wasp?"

"It was a man," shrieked Matilda.

"A man! Good patience, Matilda! Whatever can you mean?

"A man and a sister," persisted Miss Zink. "Oh, the wickedness! oh, the treachery!"

"Has Fanny done anything?"

"Fanny! I wish it had been. It is that sly, smooth Mabel. I told you not to let her come. I went into that opening by the beeches, and there" (shriek!) "I caught them together, making love." (Shriek, shriek!). "He was kissing her" (shriek, shriek, shriek!) "he was, mother, as true as we are here!" (Shriek, shriek, shriek, shriek!)

"I'll lock Mabel up, my dear, as soon as we get her home. Who was kissing her? Mr. Spriggs?"

"Not *that* stupid Simon! he never kisses anybody. It was Mr. Halliwell. Somebody ought to write to his bishop."

Mrs. Zink screamed in echo of her daughter, and Hester was so petrified that she let go Miss Zink's feet.

"I never heard of anything so demoralising as for a parson to kiss," sobbed Miss Matilda. "I wonder where he learnt it? Not in the Commandments. He had got his arm round her, and his face glued to hers. Emma Farley and Augusta Dove saw it as well. Of course he will never attempt to face us from the pulpit again! He must buy a mask."

"I don't believe it," cried Mrs. Zink, who had been collecting her scattered senses. "You must have seen double, Matilda."

"We saw single enough," replied the young lady, roughly. "After everything we have done for him! run and reved ourselves to death

over disgusting parish business—contaminated our fingers, sewing for those grubs of charity children—had him to our house at all hours and all meals—learnt new songs for him—worn new dresses for him—and to be served in this treacherous way! to be despised and deserted for that little wretch of a Mabel!"

With the last words Miss Zink recommenced the dance of her legs. Hester thought she would leave the grotto, and was gliding from it when she saw her brother approaching, with Mabel on his arm.

"Hester," he sang out, "do you happen to know where Mrs. Zink is?"

"She is here."

"Don't come in!" screamed Matilda, as they drew near the entrance; "don't contaminate us with your presence. Oh, you false—thieves!"

Hester was not sufficiently collected to note all that passed; but she heard her brother say that Mabel had promised to be his wife, provided her parents had no objection. It was Miss Matilda, he intimated, who had caused him to speak so soon; otherwise he should have chosen another time and place.

To describe the discomfiture of the pic-nic party when the news spread would be a task. Could they have shaken their Vicar in a bag, it might have relieved their feelings in a measure; but to shake Mabel to the bottom of the sea and leave her there would have relieved them more effectually. Mrs. Zink alone was composed: when her disappointment about Matilda went off, she subsided into a quiet glow of triumph. She *had* secured him: if not for one daughter, for another.

A Mrs. Rice came up to Hester, and spoke in a confidential tone. "It is the most unsuitable wife your brother could have chosen; and I am not actuated by *their* motives, Miss Halliwell, in saying so, for my girls are under ten. Mabel Zink ought to marry a rich man, who could keep her in idleness, for she is an incapable do-nothing, and she will never be anything else. He had better have taken Matilda."

"Mabel is young," rejoined Hester.

"Quite old enough to have distanced the others in the race," quoth Mrs. Rice, significantly. "She laid her plans deeper than any of them, and she has won."

"Mabel Zink never strove to win Alfred!" uttered Hester.

"So you may think," answered Mrs. Rice. "I have seen a good deal, living, as I do, next door to the Zinks, and always running in and out. Mabel was kept back by her mother, but she put herself forward. She would steal an interview with your brother in the hall and chatter to him; she would meet him out of doors; in fact, they were always meeting, and she would put on her pretended shy, attractive, modest ways. I heard her invite herself to your house that evening, and saw through it. Not a young lady in Chelson has laboured more assiduously to catch him than has Mabel Zink."

The words troubled Hester greatly, but she only remarked that she hoped Mabel would make a good wife.

"Not in the prudent sense of the word," observed Mrs. Rice. "Mabel can spend money, but she has no idea of saving it by domestic management. Why, she could not iron a pocket-handkerchief; or scarcely hem one. And she will have no fortune: it is well known that the old lawyer lives up to his income, some say beyond it. Rely upon it, this is the worst day's work she and your brother ever did. To fix on each other is to prepare for struggles and poverty."

A curious recollection darted into Hester's mind then—of the life of struggle promised to them all by her Aunt Copp. She felt very sad, and an impulse she could not restrain urged her to speak to Mabel, who happened to draw near as Mrs. Rice walked away.

"My dear Mabel," she began, "I fear you and my brother ought not to think of marrying, at least yet. Do you know how very small his living is?"

"Two or three hundred a year."

"Two or three hundred a year!" echoed Hester. "Where can you have received so false an estimate of his income? They call it one hundred and seventy pounds, but there are outgoings, and it does not bring him in more than one hundred and fifty pounds, if so much."

"Oh, that's lots," cried Mabel. "A hundred and fifty! It is more than we can spend. And there's the house as well."

"You do not know the value and uses of money. You——"

"Yes, I do," interrupted Mabel. "Mamma always allows me fifteen pounds a year for my clothes, and I have to eke it out by all sorts of contrivances."

"Dear Mabel, there are expenses in a married life which you little foresee or think of, and they come on very soon. Pray believe that I am full of love, both to you and Alfred, when I suggest that you should reconsider matters, and look to consequences."

"It will be quite fun to economise. I shall like it. As good as our gipsy party here to-day. You know we had to drink out of each other's glasses."

"No, Mabel, it will not be fun. You will find that you have plunged yourselves into difficulty and trial."

The nearest approach to a pout or frown that Hester had seen on Mabel Zink's face appeared then. "You are dissatisfied with me, Miss Halliwell; you wish he had chosen Emma Farley, or Mary Hook, or perhaps Matilda! You detest me for winning him, and you don't like me at all."

"My dear Mabel," said Hester, vexed to be so misconstrued, "the very fact of my speaking thus to you proves that I like and esteem you; otherwise my remonstrance would have been made to Alfred. I only ask you to reflect, to deliberate, and I urge it for your sake

rather than for his; for in a home of poverty the daily crosses and privations fall more heavily upon the wife than the husband."

"There's nothing to deliberate upon," was Mabel's impatient answer as she escaped from Hester. "Mr. Halliwell's living is plenty to begin upon, and he is sure to get a better one in time."

"Good-night, Miss Halliwell," said Mrs. Hook to Hester as they gained the town on their return and halted at that lady's door. "A pleasant day we have had. Excuse me," she continued, lowering her voice to a whisper, "but if ever there was a Tom Noodle in this world—and he must forgive my saying it—it is your brother, for being taken in by that sly cat of a Mabel Zink."

"I wish you a good-evening, ma'am," stiffly said Mrs. Dewisson, when they came in turn to her door, while her daughter offered Hester only one finger to shake; "present my compliments to your brother, and say I wish him joy of his bargain. And I wish Miss Matilda well through her disappointment, for she had set her whole heart and mind upon him. I hope she will not get brain fever."

"The same to you," was the cool reply, when Hester afterwards stopped to say good-night to Mrs. Farley. "If everyone was of my mind, Miss Halliwell, they would bring a general action against your brother for breach of promise, and I shall not hesitate to-morrow to avow my opinion publicly. What business had he to accept all the presents and the anti-macassars, if he knew he had got his eye on that deceitful, die-away Mabel Zink? It would be dishonourable conduct in any man, but it is positive dishonesty in a clergyman."

Hester reached home, glad to be there, and her heart was sore in many ways. Before dinner-time the following day, notes had arrived from three-and-twenty ladies, begging to resign all future aid or participation in parish business. In drawing the ink towards him to write the answers, Mr. Halliwell spilled some over one of the white netted chair coverings. "It is nothing," said he, in his dreamy way.

"Put this into cold water, Betty," exclaimed Hester, running with it into the kitchen. And Betty hastened to take it from her, as anxious about it as she was.

"You must be careful of these, Alfred," Hester observed, returning to the parlour; "you will get no more of them, or of anything else."

"No," he answered. But there was a quiet smile on his face, as if he had been more awake to the by-play carried on than Hester had given him credit for.

"No, indeed," she repeated. "When a clergyman makes known to his congregation that he has chosen a wife, let him rest assured he will be troubled with no more anti-macassars."

Mrs. Zink hurried on the wedding, and settled it to take place in August. But Hester did not wait for it; she returned home.

(To be continued.)

ANIMAL DISGUISE AND DEFENCE.

IN nature the struggle for existence is very marked and universal. The species of animals which increase and multiply owe, in great measure, their persistence to their power of cunningly adapting themselves to the circumstances in which they are placed, and of affecting disguises and expedients of many kinds.

The weaker and less adaptive ones go to the wall, and more or less gradually die out. The strong are those which, either consciously or unconsciously, develop imitations or employ devices of concealment, ruses of many kinds to mislead and deceive their enemies. In some cases this lies in colour, in tint so exactly resembling the ground they haunt or the vegetation among which they rest, that they are hardly to be detected by the eye unless in motion.

Some insects in repose exactly resemble a dried leaf on a tree; others a little stump of dried wood attached to a branch. Birds conform to the colour of the herbage amongst which they nestle. The partridge is precisely of the hues of the ditch bottoms of the fields; and even the pheasant, with its more brilliant markings, is not easily followed by the eye amid the undergrowth of ferns and brushwood. The plumage of the snipe is so like that of the brown marshes it loves, that it is scarcely possible to detect it till it rises. This tendency of the wild animals has nowadays received a definite name due to Mr. Darwin, and is called "Conforming to Environment."

It is even more noticeable in the eggs and nests of certain species of birds than in the plumage of the birds themselves.

The wild duck's eggs, for example, are of the tint of the reeds or water-flags where it has its nest; those of the lapwing so closely resemble the ploughed land on which it lays them that one may walk along a field and pass a dozen nests or more without having noticed any of them. The short-lived little wren invariably adapts her nest to the colour and appearance of the surrounding foliage, or whatever else may be near to the cosy, comfortable nest she builds.

"In a beech tree near the house," writes Mr. St. John, "on which the leaves of last year still remain at the time when the birds commence building, the wrens form the outside of their nest entirely of withered leaves of the beech, so that, large as it is, the passer-by would never take it for more than a chance collection of leaves heaped together; and though the nest is as firm and strong as possible, they manage to give it the look of a confused mass of leaves, instead of a round and compact ball, which it is."

The chaffinch builds usually in apple-trees, and so nearly imitates the lichen-covered branches by covering her nest with lichen, that few would detect it—a fact which, no doubt, goes far to account for the large

number of chaffinches to be found everywhere in the country—the ruse succeeding admirably against bird-nesting youngsters, notwithstanding the close proximity of the nest in most cases to human dwellings.

These devices are, of course, most common with the birds that nest on the ground, or build in low-lying shrubs or in hedgerows; those, on the other hand, that build in lofty trees do not have the same need to resort to such devices, finding in mere elevation a protection from most of their enemies.

The birds whose eggs are easily distinguished by their colour, generally take care to cover them neatly with leaves or feathers when they rise from the nest. The birds which build what are called domed nests, indeed—only another form in which the protective instinct expresses itself—usually have light-coloured eggs. The wood-pigeon builds high, but in the darkest part of the wood it can find, and to this protection it occasionally trusts too much, and is sometimes so careless with its nest—only a few twigs laid over each other crossways—that the shine of its eggs can be seen through in little slanting seams of white.

To some extent, though not perhaps to the same extent as in the case of birds, this is also true of quadrupeds.

The hare, which does not have the protection of burrowing that the rabbit has, conforms its colour so exactly to the dead leaves and herbage among which it couches that it would more often escape its enemies were it not for its extreme timidity, which makes it start and run when nearly approached. Several of our well-known quadrupeds are privileged to put on winter dresses—the most striking perhaps of the protective habits belonging to them—and of these we shall speak later on.

Perhaps in the whole realm of nature there is not a more remarkable illustration of some phases of the protective instinct than is to be found in that strange creature, the night-jar, eve-churr, dorr-hawk, or goat-sucker, for it bears many names. In some parts of the country it is regarded as a monstrosity—a kind of deformed or abnormally-developed hawk, and it is accordingly shot down or hunted mercilessly by the farmers and rustics, who have indeed surrounded it with no end of superstitions.

There is not a little, it must be confessed, in its appearance and in its peculiar habits to justify this. Its mouth is carried far back and is wide, and on the upper part of the beak it is armed with a drooping row of peculiar spike-like appendages or bristles (really quills or undeveloped feathers).

It has no beak to speak of, and when seen in the front face it looks, with its bright, wide-open eyes, like some eerie elfin thing, more especially if perched on the branch of a tree or brooding on what passes for its nest below on the bare ground. Its stretch of wing is remarkable for the size of its body, and its flight is very silent,

due to the presence of soft downy swathes on the breast, under the wings and over the legs, so that only the toes are visible. And its toes—particularly the middle toe—are unlike those of any other bird. The middle toe is furnished with a kind of comb-like flange or fringe, about the true purpose of which naturalists have had many theories but have come to no agreement.

The whole aspect of the creature is outré. It is a bird of the twilight or eve, rather than of the night, and is exceedingly shy and secluded. Owing to the peculiarities in the formation of its feet, it always perches along a branch, not across it as other birds do. This does much to aid its concealment, the plumage being a mixture of moorland tints—the ash grey, brown and yellow of furze, firs and ferns, with dim blotchings here and there like the russet of fading leaves. It is easy to be seen how truly protective this colouring is.

In the woods which it frequents, if you go and sit in certain places in the twilight, you will be sure to see it circling round the tops of the trees—it likes fir trees—hence its name in some parts, of the wheel-bird; and you will be sure to hear its peculiar harsh, monotonous chu r-r-r, chur r-r-r, like a telegraph instrument, as has been well said, beating out its message, as it silently wings its way, with wide gape, ready to seize the moths and other insects of evening, in which it is much helped by a kind of glutinous secretion with which it covers the greater part of its mouth, and the spike-like bristles or quills, on which the insects are, so to speak, glued as soon as they touch.

If it comes close to you and notices you, it is not unlikely that, by suddenly striking its wings together in some way special to itself over its back, you will hear one of the most ghostly sounds, and cease to wonder at the superstitious dislike entertained towards it by the rustics.

Instead, however, of being an enemy to the farmer and forester, it is one of their greatest friends; for it destroys both the insects and the larvæ of many insects which are very destructive to some plants and the woods of some trees—heavy beetles and, more especially, the cockchafer.

It makes no nest, but lays its eggs in a slight depression on the bare ground, in the sand, or on the dry grass and twigs at the foot of the tree on which it perches; the eggs—invariably two—being of a colour so like to that on which they are placed, that they are not easily recognised. They are pearly-white at base, with leaden streaks, and mottlings of brown and umber—the very colour of the vegetation of the heathy and waste ground it favours. One may go past them over and over again, and even tread on them without having seen them.

The bird's devices to decoy any intruder from its nest are something wonderful. It will flutter and circle, and run as if on the tips of its long wings along the ground, will feign to have wounded itself, and

in some cases, for a short time lie still as though dead till you advance near to it, and then it is off again as if half helpless with broken wing. Very probably it will succeed in its devices, unless you are a very expert observer indeed, or if it has not frightened you, for it will, as if by conscious mimicry, assume its most hawk-like aspect, and brush right against your face, as if it knew that thus it might repel when other means had failed.

When sitting on the eggs, the bird has the power of assuming the appearance of a rude stump; and, as its eyes alone would, by their clearness, destroy the illusion, it is very careful to close or almost close them when anyone comes near—an instinct which the young, from the very egg even, seem to share.

Whence come these wonderful instincts—this special knowledge so well fitted to secure the existence of this creature, so much exposed as it would seem in other ways? No one can tell; but in it the protective resources which are found in the lapwings and other birds are developed to the full, though from its greater rarity, its seclusion and its nocturnal habits, there are comparatively few who have observed them.

Thoreau, the great American naturalist, had his own special experiences to record with regard to the American species, known as the night-hawk. In his diary, under date June 7, we find him writing :—

"Visited my night-hawk on her nest. Could hardly believe my eyes when I stood within seven feet and beheld her sitting on her eggs, her head towards me: she looked so saturnian, so one with the earth, so sphinx-like, a relic of the reign of Saturn which Jupiter did not destroy, a riddle that might well cause a man to go dash his head against a stone. It was not an actual living creature, far less a winged creature of the air, but a figure in stone or bronze, a fanciful production of art like the gryphon or phœnix. In fact, with its breast towards me, and owing to its colour or size, no bill perceptible, it looked like the end of a brand, such as are common in a clearing—its breast mottled or alternately waved with dark brown and grey, its flat, greyish, weatherbeaten crown, its eyes nearly closed, purposely, lest those bright beads should betray it, with the stony cunning of the sphinx. A fanciful work in bronze to ornament a mantel. It was enough to fill one with awe."

Again, under date of July 27, he thus speaks of the young bird :—

"One of the night-hawk's eggs is hatched. The young is exactly like a pinch of rabbit's fur, or down of that colour, dropped on the ground, not two inches long, with a dimpling, somewhat irregular arrangement of minute feathers in the middle, destined to become its wings and tail. Yet even it half opened its eyes and peeped, if I mistake not. Was ever bird more completely protected both by the colour of its eggs and of its own body that sits on them, and of the young bird just hatched? Accordingly the eggs and young are but rarely discovered. There was one egg still, and by the side of it this

little pinch of down fluttered out and was not observed at first. A foot down the hill had rolled half the shell it had come out of. There was no callowness as in the young of most birds. It seemed a singular place for a young bird to begin its life, this little pinch of down, and lie still on the exact spot where the egg lay—a flat, exposed shelf on the side of a bare hill, with nothing but the whole heavens, the broad universe above, to brood it when its mother was away."

The night-jar is not very widely distributed in our country, being only found in any number in the southern counties. In most of the home-counties, that is, the counties immediately round London, it is found. Wimbledon Common, at certain secluded parts, has its full quota; Holmwood Common, in Surrey, is a good spot for study, and at Epsom and all round Leith Hill and thereabout, ample opportunities for observation and the study of its habits present themselves. It visits some parts of Kent and Essex, and the southern portion of Herefordshire and Wilts.

Various theories have been advanced to account for the presence of the comb-like flange on its middle toe—some holding that it is for the purpose of cleaning its feathers, the shortness of its beak making the mouth hardly effective for the purpose. Our idea is that its use is to clean the quills of the upper beak from the particles of dust and dirt sure to adhere to them in its flight, owing to the presence of the gummy substances with which, as we have said, they are covered.

The night-jar does not stay long with us. If it comes with the nightingale it goes with it to softer, sunnier climes, where some supply of its favourite food is still to be found. It does no more than lay its eggs and rear its brood; then it migrates. How "the little pinch of down," grown to some semblance of the parent bird, manages the long flight is a mystery, but it does.

The fact that the bird's flight is so silent, and that in the dimness of evening it has some vague resemblance to an owl, has led it to get the name of owl, with various qualifications, as churr-owl, fern-owl, jar-owl; but it is in several respects a more wonderful bird than the owl; and all that combines to specialise it, as the naturalists say, to make it so wonderful, is closely allied with the protective colouring, habits and instincts, which alone have preserved it against the attacks of so many enemies.

Another large group of animals in which this protective process is especially discernible is the class which assumes a winter dress.

The most prominent of these among quadrupeds are the silver fox, the variable hare, and the stoat or ermine. The fur changes more or less suddenly from the hues that best served for the creature's protection during the warmer season, to white or to a markedly lighter hue, to show less conspicuously against the snow or the silvery gleam of frost on winter vegetation. And it is curious enough that not only the slower or quicker change is determined by the temperature,

but even the extent to which the change is carried. In opener seasons the white or lighter hue is less decided; in severer, more so. There is no casting off of the fur. The colouring pigments are, so to speak, withdrawn. The stoat, in his rich brown summer coat, could hardly be better protected than by it when among the dying grass and bracken and sandy hedge-sides; but that would serve him ill and make him a very clear mark for his enemies on the wide, unbroken expanse of snow.

The change operates soonest on the portions most exposed—the sides, the belly, the legs. In open seasons indeed patches are left—usually a straight strip down the back and spots on the head and shoulders—these always diminishing if the cold grows more intense. The tip of the tail is always black. Specimens are found in quite a transition stage. It should be added, too, that the more intense the cold, the fur becomes at once the thicker and glossier. The reason of this is obvious, at once to throw off the light and to preserve internal warmth.

In speaking of birds, we did not refer to the most striking instance of the snow-bunting, because its most marked feature is the winter change, of which we will now speak.

Here, as in the case of the quadrupeds, the extent of the change is determined by the measure of winter severity; and evidently, from this fact and other circumstances to be noted immediately, there is present in the bird some prophetic instinct or forecast of weather. In summer the plumage is sufficiently beautiful and distinctive: the head, most part of the breast, and the margins of the feathers above are a tawny orange, mixed here and there with patches of pale grey; and the rest of the upper feathers are brown-black.

The change of colour has nothing to do with moulting. First of all, the colour is withdrawn from the tips of the feathers, and this proceeds downwards and downwards till, at length, all that is exposed to the eye when the feathers are unruffled is white; the under plumage remaining as it was.

The snow-bunting, often called the "snowflake," is a lover of remote hills and dales; and its premature appearance in white plumage or partially white plumage, in the later autumn, often causes no little concern to the hill-farmers in the north, where grain or potatoes may be still exposed; and if they are wise they now lose no time in getting them in, for experience has taught that the advent of the "snowflake," with his partially-changed plumage, means early and severe winter weather; and this more especially if the days should then be clear and fine—one of the most deceptive of all things in higher latitudes at that season.

In principle, it is precisely the same with the ptarmigan in its change from blue-grey to pure white. With regard to it one of our best naturalists says:—

"Great as is the protection afforded by their assimilation to lichen-

coloured rocks in summer, and to snow in winter, there is little doubt that ptarmigan, like other arctic birds and animals which nature has enabled to dispense with summer pigments, derive a further advantage from this change. As white is the colour which most slowly absorbs heat rays, so, by the laws of radiation, it is also the colour which most slowly radiates heat: thus these birds are much less easily deprived of the natural warmth of their bodies in winter than they would be if still clothed with darker plumage. Here there is a double provision of nature for their advantage, acquired by one and the same process of change."

When we turn to insects, the field of illustration is so great as to be perplexing.

Butterflies, many of them, favour the flowers that are of colours akin to those of their wings. The Purple Emperor affects certain wild geraniums, on which, when in repose, it is almost impossible for the eye to detect it; and the brown spotted Fritillaries are so coloured as to match exactly the lichen-dotted leaves of the birch woods which they most frequent.

And if this applies in degree to our native butterflies, some exotics still more directly illustrate the law.

Mr. Wallace tells us that in Sumatra he found a large butterfly with the upper surface of a rich purple, each wing crossed with a broad bar of bright orange. He was eager to find a specimen and persevered in a long hunt. Among the bush and dry leaves he followed where it settled, but without success, for a long time. At last he succeeded, the insect in repose so exactly resembling a dead leaf attached to a twig that even he, an educated and expert field-naturalist, had overlooked it again and again. And evidently it had the fullest faith in its own disguise; for had it stirred on being closely approached, it would at once have been seized with the net.

The true moths—those jewels of the night—papillons de nuit, as the French call them, but in many species far more lovely than any butterfly, present in themselves a solid body of evidence.

Why should such lovely colours, such delicacy of form, such grace and exquisite balance and proportion, such silken softness of flight, be hidden, as it were, from the daylight, and from the eyes that would delight to dwell on them? They are so brightly coloured and beautiful, and their enemies are so many, that doubtless, as day-flyers, they would soon be exterminated. The instinct to shun the day is in their case protective.

And so also are the colours of their upper wings, which, in repose, are folded over the under and more brilliant ones—frequently of red, scarlet and crimson of the loveliest tints, with patches of gold, purple, cream-colour, pale grey and green, in the most exquisite combinations.

Usually, these upper wings are of so exact a match with the foliage or the bark of the trees on which they rest by day that only the most skilled eye can detect them. They slumber there so soundly that, as

collectors say, you might pin one to the wood, and it would not awaken or in any way realise the cruel imprisonment imposed on it till its proper hour of awakening had come. This is most evident in the ghost-moth and in the puss-moth, lover of the willow, and in the peach-blossom moth, lover of the bramble.

It has been neatly said of the moths that they put on their night-gowns through the day and their gay morning-gowns through the night.

It is certainly not that they are lovers of the darkness rather than of the light, for Linnæus was not wrong when he gave them the name of Phalæna, from the Greek word meaning to fly towards a light; a propensity which all moths have; but in most species happily not so strong as in the common little species with which householders are best acquainted, through its persistent buzzing and darting round the flame of the candle on summer nights, much to their annoyance; and from these, unluckily, the general idea of moths is most directly formed.

The pale brindled beauty moth so closely resembles the trunks of the oak trees, to which it resorts, that it can hardly be detected there when at rest. The buff-tip moth, in repose, is exactly like a piece of stick. The lappet moth looks like a brown ash-leaf. Other species imitate the flowers of the shrubs they frequent, as the holly flower. Others will, if disturbed, slyly work themselves, wedge-like, down into the bottom of the herbage and disappear.

In a few cases other insects are mimicked; and to this mimicry several species owe their preservation. The hornet clear-wing moth bears a remarkable resemblance to the common stinging hornet, and thus escapes falling a prey to many birds who do not relish the insect imitated. It has been observed that one species, Bryophila perla, has a great inclination to rest on blue-bricked or stone-coloured walls, resembling its own colours, and that it avoids red bricks, on which it would be easily seen, and if compelled to rest there invariably settles on the mortar. Some moths will even feign death.

The protective habits of most of the larvæ are almost as remarkable. Some have the power of ejecting a disagreeable fluid on being touched or irritated; others, as the caterpillar of the puss-moth, are armed with a scorpion-like tail, which they cast over their back when disturbed or annoyed. The hairy caterpillars are protected by their rough coats. The birds do not care for a hairy exterior and leave them—the preservation of the fox-moth is doubtless due to this characteristic strongly developed in its caterpillar.

Some of the butterflies show the same instincts. When chased, they will fall to the earth and lie quite still till you take your eye off them for a moment, and then they dart away.

The device of the cuttlefish, in squirting out on its enemies a torrent of inky fluid, in which they are blinded, is well known. It is not so well known that the jelly-fishes, those beautiful creatures,

without skeleton, but with a delicate nervous system, of which the Duke of Argyll made such pretty satirical use in the House of Lords when speaking on the Irish Land Bill, have also their own ruses, disguises and defences against enemies.

Some of them—the medusas—have the power of assuming an exact resemblance to a bubble on the surface of the water—against some assailants a sufficient disguise and protection. It is one of the most beautiful sights in nature to see the creature throw off this disguise. First it assumes the form of a tiny basket with a handle, then it quickly throws out a series of little legs, and next develops into a very active jelly-fish, iridescent in the sunshine, as it moves softly in its element.

A species of medusa, common in the Mediterranean, on being irritated and disturbed, becomes for the nonce a stinging-nettle, affecting the human hand when in contact with it exactly in the same way, and causing inflammation of the skin. The same property is possessed by several others found by us between the tropics and on the coast of Spain. Even the British species Aplisia cause considerable itching on being handled; though none have yet been found which cause permanent injury to man.

The slimy substances secreted on the skins of eels is doubtless a means of defence, which is made more effective by the electrical properties which some of these, as well as other fishes, possess.

It is easier to collect instances than to account for or explain the origin and development of these remarkable habits and instincts. Some may be accounted for in one way, some in another; but the sense of wonder at such manifestations is not affected by any theory on the matter. Mr. Darwin and his disciples regard them simply as one phase or exhibition of what is now called "the survival of the fittest." The progress of civilization, completely changing the surface of the earth, is also gradually but constantly changing the habits and instincts of the creatures which live upon it as well as the animals themselves. Whole species have disappeared, and are even now disappearing; and though Nature struggles to preserve her own benignant balance, man has not been innocent of conduct calculated in many ways to disturb it. All are factors in the modification of these protective habits and instincts in birds and beasts. They all tend to develop new and singular tendencies in the creatures that remain—the study of which can never fail to be interesting, suggestive and calculated to stir a profound sense of the mystery of animal life and thought.

ALEX. H. JAPP, LL.D.

"GLITTERING GOLD."

ROBERT ETHERIDGE was distinctively and emphatically a "business man." For him there was truer beauty in a faultless balance-sheet than in all the Grosvenor Gallery put together, and sweeter music in the subdued hum of a busy office than in the finest symphony ever written. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that of such trifles as art and music he never thought at all; the severe realities of "business" apparently sufficed to meet every want of his nature.

All Mr. Etheridge's movements were methodical as clockwork. An early breakfast in his bachelor lodgings, a silent journey to town, a long morning given to hard work, a hasty meal brought from the nearest dining-rooms, a second edition of the morning's work, another silent journey, a solitary meal in the lonely room he called "home," an hour's study of the financial columns of the evening papers—Mr. Etheridge was "in the city"—then, to work again till bedtime came, and another day was done.

A hard, pleasureless, monotonous existence—a life which to many men would have been literally maddening, but which had never yet struck Robert Etheridge as other than right and desirable. And yet his nature was neither sordid nor narrow; his impulses were generous and his sympathies catholic. It was scarcely so much his fault as his misfortune that at thirty-four years of age, Mr. Etheridge stood in imminent peril of degenerating into a faultlessly-accurate calculating machine.

Even machines, however, wear out in time, and the complicated human mechanism is, at least, as liable to a break-down as a locomotive. Such a break-down came to Mr. Etheridge during the sultry July days of an almost tropical summer, when London seemed transformed to Calcutta minus all its heat-repelling arrangements. He stood his ground bravely, fighting day after day and week after week against the overpowering lassitude which was sapping the life out of heart and brain, but he had to give in at last.

"You must give up all work for some time, Mr. Etheridge. Total rest of mind and brain, with change of air and scene, are what you require."

This was the ultimatum of the eminent physician whom he was in the end driven to consult.

"Quite impossible, Sir Henry! I cannot possibly spare time to get away just now."

"My dear sir," replied Sir Henry very gravely, "let me ask you the question put by a brother physician in a similar case—'Can you spare the time to die?'"

There was no gainsaying that reply; so most reluctantly and slowly Mr. Etheridge packed his portmanteau, paid a gloomy farewell visit to the office, provided himself with a due supply of circular notes, and left Charing Cross one evening en route for Switzerland, a banished, désœuvré, melancholy man.

At first he was far too little interested in his travels to plan any original route, but simply followed the course of his circular ticket, doing the "regular Swiss round" in mechanical fashion, meeting the same people time after time, passing from one huge overgrown hotel to another which seemed its twin brother, wearily but conscientiously seeing all that his Baedeker told him he ought to see, and mixing up all he saw into glorious confusion in his tired brain.

He visited Berne, and only marvelled how grown-up people could find amusement in patiently watching the little old clock; at Geneva he felt half-blinded by the hard glare of the blazing white quays; Lausanne only made him wonder at the number of its telephone wires; and at Fribourg he vainly tried to take some little interest in its big organ and slender bridges. And still, like Gallio, he "cared for none of these things."

But presently, with returning health and vigour, there gradually awoke in him an unwonted desire to know something more of that "Nature" which he had hitherto considered just a craze of women and painters; and before long, to his own intense astonishment, Robert Etheridge found himself revelling in long solitary excursions among the great white mountains, which till then had uttered in vain their mighty voice of invitation.

"L'appétit vient en mangeant" is true indeed of the fare which the snow-giants set before their guests; and by-and-bye only the necessity for husbanding his returning strength prevented the sober, business man from attempting ascents not beneath the notice of the Alpine Club. But all severe exertion having been strictly forbidden by Sir Henry, Mr. Etheridge had perforce to content himself with less exhausting excursions.

In spite, however, of this newly-awakened faculty for enjoyment, Robert Etheridge remained an eminently unsociable "voyageur," never making any of those pleasant, passing, table-d'hôte acquaintances which to many people give one of its chief zests to foreign travel. Alone he came, and alone he went, drinking in new health for body and mind with each breath of the pure mountain breezes, but remaining as solitary in his delight abroad as he had always been in his labour at home.

"Mein Herr! Herr Engländer! Can I with you one moment speak?"

Mr. Etheridge turned sharply round. It was the busy, courteous host of the Bär at Wilderswyl who called to him.

"Certainly. What is it?"

"You have yesterday asked me, mein Herr, for the road to Grindelwald, nicht wahr? And to-day I have a party who there by carriage go; and they ask me to find one more to take the third seat and share cost. Shall I to them say that you go also?"

Mr. Etheridge looked doubtful. He did not at all like the enforced companionship, yet remembered that seven good miles of hot, dusty road might prove a very wearisome tramp.

"When do they propose starting?" he asked.

"To-day—in one half hour. The carriage is making ready at present. The Herr Engländer will then go?"

"H'm—I don't care if I do."

The ungracious assent was scarcely uttered before the good landlord had bowed his acknowledgments and departed, for time was a precious commodity with him just then.

Already half repenting his compliance, Mr. Etheridge went to his room to prepare for the expedition. It was then about eight o'clock in the morning, and the sun shone forth in all his glory.

"What an idiot I was to say 'Yes,'" he grumbled to himself as he selected his own alpenstock from the array in the long hall-rack. "Now here I am tied for the day to a couple of beer-drinking German students, or a fat Frenchman and his dame, or, worse still, to a pair of 'Arries out for a 'oliday! Well, if they should prove very obnoxious, I can get rid of them somehow, no doubt, even if I have to pay for a carriage and walk, after all."

In the courtyard of the Hotel Robert found the "Einspanner" and its sturdy little steed all ready for departure. Ready, too, was the old dried-up Swiss driver—but of those drawbacks to the day's pleasure, his companions, there was as yet no sign. Just as he was beginning to cherish a hope that after all he might not be called upon to fulfil his over-hasty bargain, the "patron" appeared at the door, ushering towards the "Einspanner"—neither students, nor fat couples, nor rollicking tourists, but—two radiant visions in dainty white costumes and picturesque broad-brimmed hats.

It was too much! Robert Etheridge fairly gasped for breath as the trio appeared.

Had he not been so miserably confused he would speedily have discovered that the enemy seemed at least as much disconcerted as he himself felt. When he did recover consciousness, the visions had retreated to the Hotel door, and a musical voice was speaking in low, rapid tones.

"It is just *too* absurd, Olive! How came Herr Waldstein to be so unutterably idiotic? I asked him in my very choicest German for a *lady* companion, and now he declares I never mentioned the word lady at all! I believe he has done it just to spite me for speaking German to him at all—he is so ridiculously proud of his English! Now what *are* we to do?"

"It seems to me that there is but one thing to be done," answered

a slower and quieter voice. "We must of course stand to our bargain the mistake is ours, and we have no right to inconvenience a stranger by our own stupidity."

Though wholly unaccustomed to the society of ladies, Robert Etheridge was a true gentleman at heart. He came forward at once, bowing with more of chivalrous respect than of easy grace.

"There has been a little mistake, I fear," he said courteously. "Please do not let me be in your way for a moment. I shall follow my original intention and walk to Grindelwald."

He turned to enter the house, but found the doorway completely blocked by the portly form of their host. Poor Herr Waldstein looked quite discomposed by the failure of his neatly-arranged programme.

"Ach, meine Damen!" he exclaimed in pathetic tones. "Why goes it so ill? Why think you such evil at me? The Herr Engländer is *so* comme il faut!—so respectable!—so *old!*"

It was not in human nature to resist the pathos of that climax. For a minute everybody made a brave attempt at dignified unconsciousness, but it was a complete failure; first on one face, then on another a smile flickered, till from the lips of the younger girl there rang out a little musical peal of undisguised laughter.

Of course that laugh decided the matter, and five minutes later the Einspanner was on its way to Grindelwald with three occupants not reckoning the merry old driver.

When Mr. Etheridge at last found courage to look at his new companions, he knew that the Fates had shown themselves decidedly favourable to him. Both the ladies were prettily dressed in soft white gowns, here and there relieved with skilful touches of blue, and they wore shady hats of Swiss manufacture with "garniture" quite Parisian in its elegant simplicity. Both were young, slender, and refined in appearance. Here, however, the resemblance ended.

The elder of the two was an unmistakable beauty—a tall and stately girl, with finely-modelled features, a perfect complexion, soft, radiant blue eyes, and a wealth of golden-brown waving hair. The expression of her face was calm, not to say cold, and a grave dignity characterised her words and actions.

The younger girl was also fair in complexion, but her features were insignificant, her complexion pale and freckled, and her hair of a dull reddish hue which looked like a caricature of the other's sunlit tresses. Yet, notwithstanding all these defects, the face was not without a certain attractiveness of its own. The eyes were bright and speaking, and the piquant vivacity of the countenance served to distract attention from its shortcomings in other respects. Her voice, too, was exceedingly pleasant, and her lively chatter and comical comments on each new object of interest soon set their chance companion more at his ease. She laughed at the jodelling boys with their monster horns. She laughed at the ragged urchins who

pattered beside the carriage with bunches of dusty edelweiss, little carved châlets, and baskets of wild strawberries. She laughed at their driver's repeated promise to show them some "gemse" in their native haunts. She laughed when again and again the promise failed to be fulfilled.

"Do you really believe in the actual existence of these 'gemse?'" she demanded merrily of her companions. "*I* don't! I believe they are as much creatures of the imagination as fairies or water-sprites. I intend to make out a new list of fabulous animals some day, and to insert together with unicorns and phœnixes the world-famed 'gemse' of Switzerland. Tell me now"—turning to Mr. Etheridge—"did *you* ever see a chamois?"

"I must confess I have not yet done so," admitted Robert. "But at any rate I have eaten one—or part of one, rather. That was at Salvan, I remember."

"Bah! You have eaten a brown mess which the waiter *called* chamois—an ancient goat, in all probability—but what has that to do with seeing one of those slender, exquisitely-graceful creatures standing with its four fairy feet balanced on a pinnacle of rock just a little less sharp than a darning-needle? That is what I want to see. And if I do not see it before we go home, I shall remain convinced that the chamois exists only in the imagination of these superstitious old drivers and the fancy of the wood-carvers."

So she chatted on as the carriage rolled along the dusty road beside the foaming Lütschine, and slowly mounted the steep ascent to Grindelwald. The elder girl contributed little to the enlivenment of the way except the fact of her beautiful presence. She spoke little, and seemed almost lost in contemplation of the surrounding glories, though whether because honestly in harmony with them or in proud avoidance of the stranger it was impossible to say.

When the Einspanner at length discharged its load in front of one of the Grindelwald hotels, Mr. Etheridge felt decidedly perplexed as to his further movements. Ought he, uninvited, to obtrude his company upon the fair strangers in their visit to the glaciers? or ought he at once to depart, abandoning them to the tender mercies of the ragged unprofessional "guides," who already attacked them? It was a nice point of etiquette, in which Robert's inexperience could furnish him with no precedent; but the matter was promptly settled for him. Having resolutely dismissed the would-be guides in her pretty broken German, the younger girl turned to him with a merry smile.

"Of course you are going to the glaciers, Mr. ——?"

"Etheridge, at your service. Yes, I am going there, I suppose."

"Then we shall make one party, Mr. Etheridge, unless you have made other arrangements?"

Robert murmured something about being "very happy," though he himself could not have told you whether he spoke truth or false-

hood. He knew so little of young ladies that he felt utterly dazed and bewildered by the events of the morning, and as the three walked along the narrow paths leading to the glacier he shrank more and more into silence, abashed before the beauty of the one woman and the lively self-possession of the other.

"I think we ought to exchange confidences in the matter of names," said the younger girl presently. "You, we know now, are Mr. Etheridge; and we are Olive and Nellie Branscombe, not long ago both of us hard-worked teachers in the school where we had formerly been pupils. Olive taught drawing, while I heard little imps of children strum scales and finger-exercises all day long, and we had nothing in the world but each other. Can you imagine our delight when an old great-aunt, whom we had never seen, took it into her head to die, and leave us what you would most likely call a few paltry thousands each? To us they seemed inexhaustible riches, and we are still quite tête-montée with the wonder of the whole thing."

Her sister's quiet voice here interrupted the rapid flow of words.

"You forget, Nellie, all this cannot greatly interest Mr. Etheridge however interesting to ourselves."

"Nonsense, Olive! Don't I always know by instinct whether people are interested or not? Mr. Etheridge is intensely interested in what I am saying—are you not?"

She turned briskly to him with one of her sudden, bird-like movements, but before he could frame a reply she resumed her interrupted story.

"It had been the dream of both our lives to travel—Olive wanted to see places and I wanted to see people—so as soon as we could shake ourselves free from schoolroom trammels, we packed up our trunks and set off. Even in the midst of a very bad crossing we remembered that we were free women at last and were happy."

Miss Nellie laughed even at the memory of their sea-sickness.

"Now you know how we come to be here, Mr. Etheridge, wandering about, two 'maidens all forlorn,' and I assure you, you are the very first acquaintance we have made since we arrived in Switzerland."

Robert felt miserably conscious that a polite reply to this concluding statement was expected from him, but after a vain and agonised search for the proper words, he at last fell back upon a grave bow as the only answer he could reasonably hope to complete

II.

"But rarely human eye has known
A scene so stern as that dread lake,
With its dark ledge of barren stone—
Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
Nor aught of vegetative power
The weary eye may ken;
For all is rocks at random thrown,
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone."

Robert Etheridge knew no poetry, or surely these lines must have recurred to memory as he gazed on the gloomy Dauben See at the summit of the Gemmi Pass. A mile or so behind him lay the only habitation he had seen for hours, the little Schwarenbach Inn with its black and ghostly-looking barn; on his right stretched the cold grey waters of the long narrow lake, while on every side rose bare peaks of slaty rock, their bases encumbered with great mounds of crumbling, unpicturesque débris. No sign of human existence was to be seen except the rude track, little wider than a sheep-track, which skirted the edge of the lake.

Although Robert Etheridge had travelled some considerable distance that day, and was beginning to find each mile decidedly longer than the last, he did not stop to gaze long on this wild and dreary, yet striking scene. The weather had been unsettled when he started that morning from Kandersteg, and now the clouds hung low and threatening in the sky, a boding stillness rested over everything, and the subtle odour of gathering electricity oppressed the atmosphere. A more desolate scene in which to encounter an Alpine storm it would be hard to find, and a solitary traveller might well hasten his steps at the thought, weary though those steps might chance to be.

But all the haste Mr. Etheridge could make proved vain. Before he had left the lake behind him the first heavy drops of rain splashed sullenly into its dark, still waters, and a sudden icy blast whistled shrilly through the pass. Low distant rumblings and mutterings were heard, then the jagged peaks on the left stood sharply out for a moment against a vivid background of steel-blue lightning, a terrific crash of thunder followed, and in another minute the full force of the storm was upon him. The wind howled and raged from every quarter at once, the sullen waters rose into angry black waves, and the rain fell in one continuous torrent.

Half-blinded by the almost incessant glare, nearly deafened by the reverberating roar, drenched to the skin by the descending torrent, beaten back at every step by the fierce ice-cold blast, Robert struggled slowly forward, fighting his way inch by inch over the rough, uneven path. In vain he strove to discern some slightest coign of vantage against the fury of the tempest! the pitiless barren peaks held out no hope of shelter to even the keenest gaze. Stay! There,

about a hundred yards away, he spies one solitary block of fallen rock, which may perhaps afford a moment's breathing space if he can get under its lee.

But when at last he had fought his way across the shifting shingle of broken slate which separated him from the boulder, Mr. Etheridge started back in dismay. Two human forms—women's forms—lay huddled together at its base, crushed to the earth by mingled terror and fatigue. He struggled to their side, and in another minute had recognised his companions in that sunny drive to Grindelwald a fortnight before.

"Get up at once," he shouted with the whole force of his lungs. "You must not stay here a minute longer. We must get to the inn at the end of the pass somehow!"

His voice was all but lost in the roar overhead, but the terrified girls understood his gestures and obeyed him instinctively. Together the three breasted the hurricane, which struck them with almost the force of an actual wave. It was a desperate demand on their failing strength, but now that they were no longer alone the girls showed themselves both brave and patient, and made the most of their slender powers. An hour later the three travellers, exhausted almost to the point of unconsciousness, staggered into the kitchen of the little wooden inn standing on the brink of that gigantic wall of rock which frowns down upon Leukerbad.

Three days from that time the rain is still falling heavily and steadily. For forty-eight hours the tempest had raged almost continuously, and still the rain keeps the travellers close prisoners in the tiny Wildstrübel Inn, impatient enough, no doubt, yet thankful for even its scanty accommodation as they gaze at the desolate scene without.

"Surely it cannot rain much longer in this unconscionable fashion, Mr. Etheridge? We must have had whole Rhones-full of water in the last three days! Don't you think we really shall get down to Leukerbad to-morrow?"

Nellie Branscombe and the gentleman she addresses sit trifling over an improvised draught-board in the little sanded parlour, while her sister, stationed by the window, is engaged on a sketch of the two players.

"I hope so, Miss Nellie," answers Robert cautiously; "but it is quite impossible to make any engagements on behalf of such weather as this."

"Do you really *hope* it?"

The vibrant, musical voice is lowered almost to a whisper, and the bright eyes are lifted for a momentary but speaking glance. A slight flush rises to Robert's face as he answers.

"Yes, for your sake. You will be glad to return to the comforts of civilization again."

"Have I seemed so very unhappy here, then?"

"By no means. You have——"

"Come here, Nellie," interrupts Olive just at that moment. "I want you to tell me what you think of these heads."

Miss Nellie looks just the least bit in the world annoyed, but does as she is bid.

"What spite are you nourishing against Mr. Etheridge, I wonder, Olive? You have certainly not flattered my unfortunate face; but to him you have been simply merciless."

"Do you think so?" asks the gentleman under discussion, masculine vanity and curiosity having conquered his natural shyness and drawn him irresistibly to the sketch. "To me, now, the likeness seems very good."

"You must be modest, indeed, if that is really your opinion," says his late opponent, not without some little significance.

"I drew Mr. Etheridge as I saw him." Olive's tones are quiet and even as ever.

"Then decidedly we see with different eyes."

The words are spoken almost in a whisper, but they do not fail to reach Mr. Etheridge's sharp ears.

For three whole days the trio had now been shut up together in the little inn—a length of time probably equal to at least three years of "society" intercourse—and for one, at any rate, of the three, it was a new and fateful experience.

Bereaved of every accustomed occupation, cut off from ledgers and balance-sheets, deprived of mailbags and telegrams, destitute of newspapers and financial columns, Robert Etheridge found himself for the first time in his life forced into intimate relations with two young and attractive ladies.

Of Olive and her stately beauty the prudent business man from the first entertained a most wholesome awe, not to say an actual dread. Beauties, he had always heard, were "kittle cattle to shoe behind," and confused recollections of Delilah, Jezebel, Cleopatra, Medea and the Sirens rose warningly to mind whenever he caught his eyes resting with pleasure on Olive's perfect features and graceful form.

It was with a sense of positive relief that Mr. Etheridge turned to plain, homely little Miss Nellie. Here, at any rate, was no radiant beauty to dazzle his eyes and confound his judgment; here he might safely venture to accept the overtures of friendship so frankly and simply offered him. In his enforced idleness and seclusion her good-natured efforts to relieve the tedium of the long slow hours soon made him feel more at home with Miss Nellie than with three-fourths of the men of his acquaintance.

This much Mr. Etheridge confessed to himself very early in the course of their imprisonment; yet even as he did so, he heaved a regretful sigh to the memory of the absent ledgers.

But by the time the third day drew to its close, Robert had grown

to endure the absence of those same ledgers with the most stoical and amazing calmness. Miss Nellie he had in the meantime discovered was a very remarkable young lady. Her ready fund of bright conversation, her unfailing good-humour, and her numberless dainty devices for contriving comfort out of discomfort, and amusement out of dreariness itself, all united to win his admiration. But above all, Mr. Etheridge was struck with her keen and rapid insight into his own idiosyncrasies. Never before had he realised how much that was original and interesting there lay concealed beneath the crust of his acquired silence and reserve. How came this young and inexperienced girl to understand his character better than he had ever before understood it himself? The only answer he could find to this question was the fact that Miss Nellie Branscombe was a very remarkable girl indeed!

III.

"HAVE you heard the news, Olive? Mr. Etheridge says that a portion of the path down to Leukerbad has been completely destroyed by the storm."

Olive looked up from her drawing with a troubled brow.

"That means, I suppose, that we must stay here till it is repaired."

"Unless you prefer to go all the way back to Spiez again. But they say the path will be ready by Thursday; the peasants are at work on it already."

"Another two days to wait here! I am very sorry, Nellie; the sooner we leave here the better for all of us."

Just then Mr. Etheridge entered the only sitting-room the little party possessed.

"So we are to be prisoners here for yet another day or two, Miss Branscombe," he remarked in no very dismayed accents.

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Olive abruptly.

A somewhat awkward pause followed. It was broken presently by her sister, who had been inspecting the weather from the window.

"Well, at any rate, the rain has stopped for a few minutes. Won't you come out with me, Mr. Etheridge, and see if we can find that edelweiss they said grew so near the house?"

Robert accepted the invitation with marked alacrity.

"I will come too," said Olive, as she gathered together her painting paraphernalia.

"How can you be so foolish, Olive? You who take cold so easily from wet feet! Now *I* could sit under a waterfall all day without fear of even a sneeze afterwards."

"The fresh air will do me good."

Olive's manner was so quietly determined that no further opposition could with decency be offered.

"That girl follows her sister about like some suspicious old

Spanish duenna!" So thought Mr. Etheridge as the trio left the house together. "One might really imagine she grudged every look and word not offered as incense at her own beautiful shrine. But I suppose all beauties are alike in demanding universal adoration, and resenting its being withheld by even the humblest individual."

This shadowy opposition was exactly what was needed to open Mr. Etheridge's eyes to the true nature of his admiration for plain, pleasant Miss Nellie; and once having grasped the fact that he really had at last "fallen in love," his business habit of prompt and decisive action impelled him to learn his fate with as little delay as possible. During the two following days he waited and watched for a favourable opportunity; nor, though the least vain of men, could he well doubt that Miss Nellie was far from unwilling to accord him that grace. A dozen times the two were on the point of rambling away on some well-devised pretext, and a dozen times did Olive's lovely face assume a look of steady determination as she prepared to accompany them.

But when two people are mutually bent on such an interview, even the cleverest of duennas will assuredly find herself outwitted in the long run. The path to Leukerbad was not ready quite so soon as they had hoped; and late one evening Olive, who had been summoned upstairs for a conference with their landlady, found on her return to the sitting-room that it was empty, nor could she find any clue to the whereabouts of its late occupants.

Meanwhile the fugitives were standing on the edge of the mighty wall of rock which looks down upon Leukerbad and towers nearly two thousand feet above it in perpendicular majesty. Far in the distance, across the fertile plain at their feet, the rays of the setting sun rested on the lovely chain of Monte Rosa, and every silver peak blushed crimson in the soft rosy light. They gazed almost in silence till the last bright gleam had died away and only a pale glimmering sheen remained.

"Our last evening on the Gemmi," said Nellie, softly and sadly. "To-morrow—good-bye to the poor old Wildstrübel, and back again to tables d'hôte and civilization."

"Will it be good-bye to me also, Miss Nellie?"

There was a meaning in Robert Etheridge's grave voice which no woman could mistake.

"Good-bye to you, Mr. Etheridge? Well, of course in one sense it must be. We can't go wandering about the country together in shepherd and shepherdess fashion, you know. Switzerland is not Arcadia, after all." Nellie sighed softly. "But we shall certainly hope to see you again somewhere, in the great someday, as the Fates may determine for us."

"The Fates obey our wishes sometimes if we will to have it so," said Robert, slowly and pointedly. "Miss Nellie, you have not known me long, but I think you know me well. Could you trust me

sufficiently to give me leave to try and win you for my wife? I have never cared for any other woman before."

A gleam of pleasure flashed over his companion's face as she listened to his simple, straightforward words, but there was no tremor in her voice as she answered them.

"You do me far too much honour, Mr. Etheridge. I feel the full force of the compliment; but I assure you my newly-gained liberty is too precious to be sacrificed for any man living."

Mr. Etheridge looked closely into the girl's face. Surely it was triumph, undisguised triumph, which lent that sparkle to her eyes and that flush to her cheeks?

"Do you mean to tell me," he asked quietly, "that you have no regard whatever for me? that your looks and words through this past week have been just so many false beacons luring me on to make a fool of myself?"

"Oh, not a fool, Mr. Etheridge! It would be a very bad compliment to me to call yourself so hard a name just for paying a passing tribute to my poor attractions."

Miss Nellie smiled her brightest smile as she spoke, but Robert's face only grew the colder and harder.

"You have not yet answered my question. Have you, or have you not, any such regard for me as you have assuredly made me believe you had?"

"Indeed, Mr. Etheridge, you have curiously deceived yourself if that is the interpretation you have placed on the ordinary civilities one shows to a pleasant travelling acquaintance."

Robert Etheridge turned on his heel, and without another word left her standing there alone.

He went straight into the little parlour where Olive sat solitary in the twilight.

"Miss Branscombe," he said, curtly, "your sister has fooled me to the top of her bent, and now I have got my dismissal. Good-bye. I shall be off in the morning before you are up."

In silence, and with down-dropped eyes, Olive gave him her hand, nor did she again look up till Mr. Etheridge had quitted the room.

IV.

"Be silent, Nellie. I will not hear another word about it. I tell you again, you are a shame and a misery to me!"

"Dear me, what a storm in a tea-cup! And all because someone has dared to prefer my poor attractions to your own statuesque magnificence!"

"You know you are speaking falsely. You have lured this man on, as you have lured others before him, just as a sacrifice to your insatiable vanity. But it shall be for the last time. I have done my utmost to prevent this happening, and I warn you that the next time

I see the game beginning, at any cost to myself I will speak out plainly."

"And earn for yourself some such sobriquet as 'The Beautiful Jealousy!' Why, I could turn such a proceeding to my own advantage with all the ease imaginable! Ah, my dear, you may have the beauty, no doubt—but the wit, that is mine! and I will show people which pays the best in the long run. With all your beauty you have never yet had one single downright offer of marriage, while I have had already nearly a dozen."

"You are boasting of your shame, Nellie. But for this man—he was made of different stuff from the others you have trifled with; he knew nothing of the arts of such girls as you, and his honest kindness to both of us ought to have been his protection from your unwomanly vanity."

A low, light laugh answered her words.

"He seems to have gained *one* of our hearts, at any rate!"

"No man will ever win my heart so easily. But I say plainly that I both like and respect Mr. Etheridge, and it was hard to give him my hand in silence this evening, Nellie, dumb from very shame of my own sister's conduct."

"Oh, don't distress yourself, I beg; you are not my keeper. And besides, I only filled a temporary gap in the good man's heart. Have you not yet discovered, my dear, that Mr. Etheridge's real mistress is—Business? If his usual occupations had been at hand, do you suppose he would ever have wasted a thought upon me? Business, my dear Olive, is to him all-sufficient."

"It may have been so in the past, but it can never be so again, Nellie. You have awakened in him new hopes and new desires, which will die hard in a man of his resolute nature. And you did this deliberately, with no other intention than that of crushing those hopes at their strongest! Oh, I may well be ashamed of my sister!"

Could this be Olive Branscombe's calm, even voice—these passionate tones of pain and indignation—or was he still dreaming? Robert Etheridge, with a sudden start, shook himself wide awake and conscious. No, he had not dreamed the impassioned words which still rang in his ears. The two voices were still audible in the silence of the night, but now so lowered that only subdued murmurs reached him. Evidently the room next his own was that night for some unknown reason occupied by the sisters, and their voices, penetrating the slight wooden partitions of the châlet, had half awakened him from the restless slumber into which after long tossing to and fro he had at length fallen. He had been dreaming of Nellie, and the voices had so woven themselves into his dream that at first he could scarcely tell how much he had dreamt and how much heard. But the substance of the conversation remained indelibly printed on his brain, and the earnest, indignant tones of Olive's protest still sounded in his

ears. Was it possible that for *his* sake the stately, quiet beauty had so roused herself? That it was *his* cause she had pleaded so fervidly in the quiet night hours? With what kindly warmth she had spoken of him! While he in his heart had been blindly unjust and ungenerous towards her. He had misjudged her cruelly, imputing to her the meanest of a woman's faults, and this was how she repaid him. Truly, all that glitters is not gold, but Mr. Etheridge confessed to himself there and then that he had forgotten the converse was equally true. Glittering gold, as well as its counterfeit, does exist in this world after all.

Next morning, to the surprise of the sisters, Mr. Etheridge appeared at the breakfast-table as usual; looking very much himself, too; for it takes more than one restless night to leave any visible print on the face of a man. Towards Miss Nellie his manner was quietly cool and indifferent, but to her sister he showed a new and gentle deference for which Olive was wholly unprepared.

That day the three travellers together descended the steep, zig-zag path hewn out of the face of the almost perpendicular rock, arriving safely, after a somewhat exciting descent, at the quaint little town of Leukerbad, a place which exists just to bathe and be bathed.

Mr. Etheridge secured rooms for himself in a different hotel from the sisters, but contrived nevertheless to pass in their society the greater part of the week he spent at Leukerbad. Together the little party visited the famous baths where ladies and gentlemen stew in company in the hot mineral water, chattering, chess-playing, reading, coffee-drinking, apparently quite at ease, though only their heads and hands are to be seen above the water. Together too they walked in the pleasant avenues where the bathers congregate during the limited portion of their day not devoted to the serious business of soaking. It was comical to recognise in the Parisian belles and their elegant cavaliers the faces they had last seen emerging from the waters like so many Ararats above a universal deluge.

Although Robert Etheridge thus lingered in her society, it was quite useless for Nellie Branscombe to try and persuade herself that any hope of future relenting on her part caused the delay. Always courteous and considerate for her comfort, Mr. Etheridge showed a quiet indifference to her liveliest sallies and brightest smiles, which mortified that young lady's vanity more keenly than the bitterest reproaches could have done.

It was to Olive that Robert now turned for companionship; nor did he strive to win her confidence in vain. Under her dignified and reserved demeanour he soon discovered depths of feeling and a wealth of thought compared with which Nellie's ready show of sympathy was hollowness itself. Certainly he did not find in her any easy flattery of his own weak points, or special interest in himself and his own peculiarities, and there were many outworks of

maiden pride and shyness to be surmounted one by one. Olive had said truly that no man would win her heart without trouble. Still, before the little party broke up, Mr. Etheridge had obtained from Miss Branscombe a definite permission to see her again in England, and with this concession as a parting grace he returned to London, fully restored to health, and apparently well contented with his journey and its results.

Robert Etheridge is still a "business man," but he is now something more than that in addition. He has found for himself many interests beyond the narrow limits of his daily work, and the realms of art and nature are no longer to him unexplored regions. Solitary evenings and a lonely fireside are also things of the past, and over his once cheerless home there now presides a gracious and graceful woman, whose beauty of outward form is a true index to the beauty of her character. "Glittering Gold!" Robert Etheridge often says to himself as his eyes rest fondly on her lovely face—but I doubt whether he has even now so far overcome the natural instincts of a "business man" as to utter the sentiment aloud!

JESSIE LEETE.

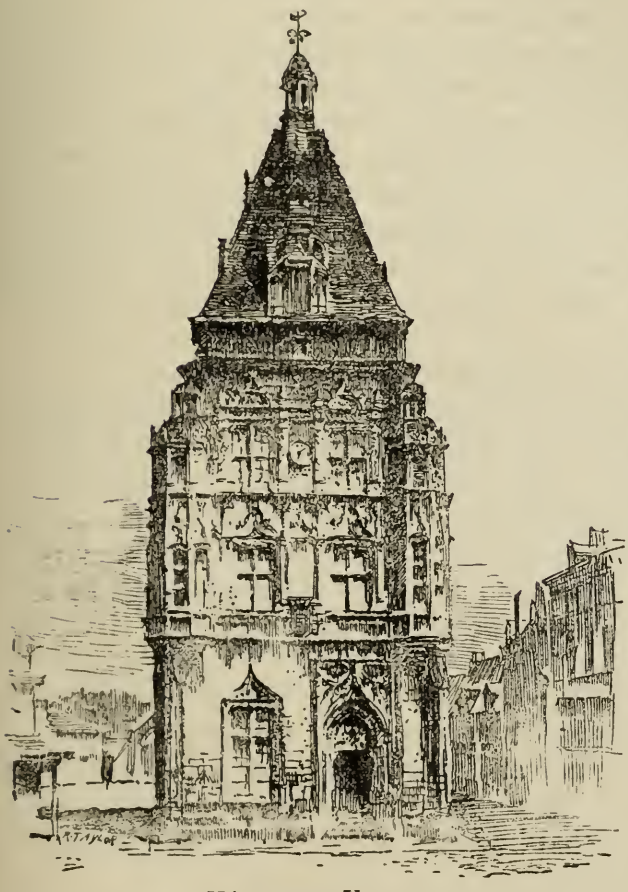
SONNET.

OH! woman, teacher thou of man, whom we
Alternately insult or glorify
With scorn as vain as is our flattery—
More than thy milk receiveth man from thee,
For what thou wert he evermore shall be,
And with him nations. Be but pure and great
And they are mighty; fall, and their estate
Lies in the dust. Fruit know we from the tree.
As in thy being man's once lay enshrined,
So thine in his. In man we woman have;
And where her heart is sordid, man we find
Of toil and gold and self the haggard slave.
And teacher-woman, where low is thy mind,
More low doth grovel man's from birth to grave.

JULIA KAVANAGH.

FAIR NORMANDY.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



Hôtel de Ville.

THE shadows of night were beginning to fall as we steamed out of Evreux on our way to Chartres. They had quite fallen when we reached Dreux, where we found we had an hour or two to wait before the train would take us onward. We were glad of the delay, and felt the time would be profitably spent in seeing a little of the town, which is one of the most ancient in France, and has played its part in French history. The fact that darkness had fallen would only add a sense of mystery, an additional interest to our inspection. For darkness appeals to the imagination; rouses it to activity; gives a certain beauty and romance to what by day might be very commonplace; it softens outlines, and if it conceals beauties, it also draws a veil over defects.

We left our numerous hand packages in the care of a rash but obliging railway official, who, after one glance at H. C.'s amiable expression, felt certain of a substantial recognition of his services. In truth he would have earned his fee, for he was undertaking no slight charge.

H. C.'s packages accumulate as he progresses through a country. Every old curiosity shop in every town he comes to is visited and ransacked. Whatever he thinks curious, genuine and artistic, whatever takes his fancy, he buys. Things too large to be carried are sent direct to England, "über land und meer." Other things, small

and fragile, he will not allow to be packed, but, done up in brown paper and tied with a string, looking neither safe nor elegant, he burdens himself with the precious articles and goes on his way rejoicing. In this manner, and with this collection, he passes from town to town; very much after the fashion of the itinerant chinamender, who frequents country roads, stops at a wayside door, puts his rivets into your broken crockery, and—occasionally—your silver spoons into his pocket. Not that H. C. is addicted to—but the assertion is unnecessary. So it comes to pass that I have occasionally known him return to his native shores carrying sufficient plates and dishes, separately done up in brown paper, to form a harlequin dinner-set. And it invariably happened that in arriving at a destination, or in changing trains, the difficulty of making four hands do the work of forty; the everlasting wonder as to whether something had not been left behind, or some particular string was not loosening and jeopardising a costly Sèvres dish or an ancient (I dare not add hideous) Majolica plate, has frequently reduced the writer to the verge of brain fever.

At Evreux, for instance, we had received a severe shock.

It has been recorded that the hotel had turned out in a body to bid us farewell and speed us on our way: amiable landlord and electrified waiters. It is an attention that we like, and when it is wanting, we feel that, in some way or other, our visit has missed its mark. Of course we speak of France, not of England, where too often these little courtesies of life, which mean so much, are conspicuous by their absence. In France it is very rarely so, and travelling is thereby made much more agreeable.

We had rattled off from the hotel in Evreux in the unsteady omnibus, and had gone quite two hundred yards on our way, when we espied a waiter tearing frantically after us, with shouts sufficient to wake the Seven Sleepers. I turned pale, and anxiously looked at H. C.; but he assured me that he had not, in a fit of poetical abstraction, packed up the hotel plate.

The matter indeed proved quite the other way. He had bought some rare old silver in Rouen, elegant and chaste designs of the First Empire period, which, carefully packed in a box (silver would not break), he treasured as the apple of his eye. This he had stowed away in safety at the inn, and had forgotten and left behind in his usual fit of abstraction. It was this that the waiter had discovered, and with this he was now struggling after us. How H. C. became excited, stopped the omnibus, received the messenger as one to whom he owed an eternal debt of gratitude, bestowed largesse upon him, and dismissed him with his blessing, may be recorded but can never be realised.

It will thus be seen that the charge undertaken by the porter at Dreux was a heavy responsibility.

We went out into the night. It was very dark. A long, wide road

led from the railway station to the town. Far down we could see lights gleaming and other signs of life and animation. We crossed a bridge, and looked over into the dark waters of the little river Blaise, a tributary of the larger Eure, which flows on its course three miles away. The waters of the Blaise were silent and sluggish, dark and cold; nothing was reflected upon their sombre surface.

Presently we reached a wide, well-formed square, in one corner of which stood the fine old church of Dreux. In the darkness it looked grand and majestic. As usual, its outlines seemed exaggerated by obscurity. There was that silence and solemnity about it which at all times appeal to one's deepest and highest emotions; ever yielding a pleasure so akin to pain that we know not which of the two predominates. Is it the mighty building itself which so affects us? or the dark canopy of the sky in its immensity? or the brooding mystery of night, all such an emblem of death and eternity, such a paraphrase, as it seems, of the long, solitary, unknown journey to the land that is very far off?

The church of Dreux belongs to the 12th–15th centuries. and is dedicated to St. Peter. The exterior has been a good deal injured by time, and to-night, in the darkness, its unfinished tower had all the picturesque effect of a ruin.

We passed through the doors of the great west front into the interior. It was large and lofty, and, dimly lighted, looked infinitely solemn and mysterious. It is late in style with the exception of the north transept and the arches of the crossing, which we thought very fine; but it appeared to have been much injured by restoration. The organ case—as is so often found in Normandy—was magnificent.

As we walked down the silent aisles, our footsteps echoed through the edifice and seemed to disturb the repose of centuries; our shadows flitted like ghosts over pillars and pavement. We peered through the closed doors of the choir, and out of the deepest obscurity ghostly images seemed to return our gaze and question our desires. Why did we disturb their quiet repose, the slumber of ages? Of the stained glass of the windows, which is said to be good, we could not judge. We looked up, and marked the pointed outlines, but the coloured transparencies were lost in the gloom of night.

As we turned to leave it all, one solitary human being—a young man; apparently a workman—entered, and marching quickly up the aisle with a light step, knelt before the image of, no doubt, his patron saint.

Was this his daily custom? Did this one solitary being, out of a whole town's population, come to worship here alone night after night? Was he formed of such material as the early monks were made? or of such stuff as would bring forth another Thomas à Kempis? or did he feel within him the devotion and fanatic enthusiasm of a Savonarola? What was he praying for? Absolution? or happiness? or success in life? Was he doing battle with some mortal sin? or

giving thanks for youth and health, the grandeur of living, the glory of possessing a distinct and individual existence, making him heir of the world?

There was nothing to tell us, and we could not ask him. We left him in an attitude of deep devotion, apparently of religious fervour. We would have given much to enter into conversation with him : to learn his history, his thoughts of life, his hopes and ambitions ; but time and the place forbade. A little lamp burning threw its light upon him, and cast a faint shadow upon the pavement. We left him to silence and solitude and went out into the night again.

In days gone by, the far off days of the Middle Ages, this church, the whole town, indeed, was the scene of a curious ceremony. On Christmas eve, a procession was formed consisting of priests, magistrates, aldermen, women and children. The ceremony, half civil, half religious, was called "La Fête des Flambards," for the reason that most of those who took part in it carried a *flambard* or torch, consisting of a piece of wood six feet long, very much dried, split in two, and lighted. These blazed out in the darkness with weird and singular effect.

The procession started from the market place, their torches glaring and flaming, and at a rapid, almost running pace, passed through certain streets of the town, finally reaching the church, of which, more soberly and solemnly, it made the complete circuit.

They then brought up in front of the great doorway, each resting his torch upon the ground, and whilst these burnt themselves out, they sang the hymn, *Veni, Redemptor Gentium !* The air took up the tale, the harmony swelled out into the distance, and people quite far off in the neighbouring country caught the sound of the voices, and took up the refrain—*Veni, Redemptor Gentium !*

In the procession people were placed according to their rank. All through the town they sang hymns in honour of Christmas. Violins and drums were stationed in different parts, and the effect must have been somewhat bewildering. Mangers were carried by young people dressed in white, and these must have contributed not a little to the singular appearance of the ceremony : a ceremony that, begun in the Middle Ages, was only discontinued in the last century.

The early history of Dreux is lost in obscurity. It is said to be anterior to the Druids, of which singular and mysterious people it is supposed to have been a great centre. It is, in fact, imagined that there is some affinity between the names Dreux and Druid. Of course it was known to the Romans, who called it Durocassis or Drocae, and it would be singular if interesting Roman Remains were not found in the neighbourhood. We cannot be too thankful that the Roman name at least has not remained as a legacy. It is only towards the beginning of the 11th century that the history of Dreux may be followed with tolerable accuracy. It was first governed by

lords or chiefs elected by the people. These were followed by hereditary chiefs, who, from being vassals to the throne of France, gradually became absolute monarchs of their little kingdom.

In the Middle Ages, like most French towns, Dreux was divided into districts, and its affairs were governed by a species of Civil Court. Justice was administered and all public affairs were directed by a Mayor and Aldermen, who erected the quaint, curious, strangely interesting and beautiful little building of which we give an illustration, and which to-day is called the Town Hall.

Here all public matters are attended to, and Justice, with eyes blindfolded and scales carefully balanced, deals forth equity. The bell in the tower, cast in the reign of Charles IX., was decorated with bas-reliefs representing the ceremony of the Flambards, and this bell rang out upon the night air during the progress of the procession. It must have been a strange mingling of sounds, not altogether sweet, not soft and low, but quaint and original; and one could almost wish that it still continued, for the sake of assisting at this relic of old times.

It was here, in the plains of Dreux, between the Blaise and the Eure, that the great battle was fought known as the Journée de Dreux, in 1562: a day of terrible slaughter between the Roman Catholics under the Duc de Guise, and the Huguenots under the Prince de Condé. The Catholics were victorious, and the Prince was taken prisoner.

Dreux has indeed gone through all the vicissitudes of a country given up to frequent changes of government. It has seen all the horrors and desolation of war. Six times it has been besieged. Now it has fallen and become a dependency of the French throne; now, freeing itself, has submitted to the rule of the Counts of Dreux. It formed the dowry of the powerful and bigoted, the cruel and relentless Catherine de Medicis; and the sad fate of the Huguenots seemed to culminate at its very gates when the tide of the Journée de Dreux turned against them and their champion was taken captive.

All these bygone ceremonies and events make Dreux very interesting, and we felt as we passed through the winding streets that we were treading on ground consecrated by the lapse of ages.

Not that the houses themselves bore much trace of antiquity. They seemed for the most part modern, with very little form or comeliness of outline. The quaintest, most interesting building, was the Hôtel de Ville near the great church. It stands with its back to the square, focussed by the narrow street; a curious Mediæval monument, with rich sculptures and latticed windows, and a high roof surmounted by a small turret or bell-tower, reminding one forcibly of some of the quaint and curious monuments of the dead cities of the Zuyder Zee. Some of its rooms are now devoted to a museum, but nothing they contain can be half so interesting and worthy of study as the exterior of the building itself.

Turning our backs upon this, before us rose the picturesque and beautiful hill, which throws a glamour of romance over the town of Dreux, redeeming it for ever, in spite of the modern handiwork of man, from the tame and the commonplace.

As we saw it to-night, faintly outlined, it looked full of beauty; its steep and rugged sides towering to a considerable height; an apparent wilderness of shrubs and trees adorning it with delightful wildness and profusion. The height is crowned by the ruins of the castle of the Comtes de Dreux, those powerful nobles of the Middle Ages, who became extinct towards the close of the 14th century. The ruins now consist of the remains of an old donjon, a Norman gateway, and a Gothic chapel dating from the 12th century. In 1590 and again in 1593, Henri IV. besieged the town, and on the second occasion destroyed the castle.

Upon the summit of the hill, enclosed within walls, in the midst of a beautiful garden, surrounded by walks, which by day are free to the world, and whence you have a magnificent panorama of the town at your feet, the winding rivers and far stretching plains: in the midst of this little paradise rises the modern chapel, built in the form of a Greek temple, surmounted by a cupola, which is the mausoleum of the House of Orleans. It was erected by Louis Philippe when he was Duke of Orleans. Here are interred the last Duchesse de Penthièvre; the Princesse de Lamballe, massacred at the Revolution; the beautiful and accomplished Princesse Marie of Wurtemburg, daughter of the King; the Duke of Orleans and the mother of Louis Philippe. But it was only in 1876 that the bodies of the King and Queen, the Duchess of Orleans, and the Princes of Condé, were removed from Weybridge and placed here in the chapel of the Virgin.

This we much wished to see, but it was a winding and uphill walk from the town. Should we have time to do it? What if we lost the train onward to Chartres? What of H. C.'s priceless curiosities, left in charge of the porter? of our heavier gear, which, registered for Chartres, would certainly go on without us? That at least was safe, thanks to the admirable French system of registration: admirable, except at the moment that you have to register your own baggage, and find yourself at the end of a long and very slowly decreasing string of passengers; or in front of an irritating registering clerk, who seems to be attending to everything on earth except his legitimate business, and turns an absolutely deaf ear to your mild remonstrances. It is at these moments that you need the amiability of a saint and the patience of Job, though the chances are that you possess neither the one nor the other. Happy the man who can take all things calmly; who, in moments of irritation, commands his temper and keeps under subjection his nervous system, and by means of a polite smile conceals the agonies he is suffering as successfully as the Spartan lad concealed the terrible fox. It is the truest philosophy:

and the philosopher is a great gainer. He has done more, we are told, than conquer a city.

We determined to make the attempt, risk the train and the priceless objects of bigotry and virtue, as Mrs. Malaprop would have it, and plunged boldly from the town into the outskirts.

It was a very dark, very winding road, curiously countrified; not lonely, or desolate or deserted, for there were houses on either side, with interregnums of empty spaces which seemed in possession of the air, the trees and smaller vegetation; and, on the right, the precipitous hill-side.

The houses were varied and curious, given up to all sorts of trades and occupations. Houses of many forms and sizes; narrow and upright, low and straggling, following upon each other. One was an inn; an old-fashioned French auberge; and as we approached it, a light square cart came tearing down the hill, apparently from the outside country, and drew up with an abruptness which sent the horse on its haunches, and the ladies all but flying out of the vehicle. They looked like buxom farmer's wife and daughter, born into the world without superfluous nerves, for they merely gave a scream, which was followed by laughter as they skipped lightly to the ground. The author of this little tour de force was evidently the worthy farmer himself: a stalwart son of Anak, who, proud of his feat, threw the reins to a man—half ostler, half waiter—who had come out in time to witness the performance and emphasise it by his applause.

"Eh bien, papa! allons boire un coup," cried mademoiselle, as she seized her father's arm and entered the inn, dutifully followed by madame la mère.

We apologise to the reader for the want of refinement in the young lady's exclamation, but as a faithful historian we can only record the words as we heard them. Moreover, they were an indication of her character, which would be misrepresented by being softened. The reader will be able exactly to match the young lady with the phrase. The inn swallowed them up, and we saw them no more.

Immediately after this, we ourselves fell into grief. The road, we have said, was dark as Erebus. Since the mature age of ten, we have suffered from what is called night blindness: that is, an inability to see anything in the dark. We are aware that this sounds either a very Irish sentence, or a very simple assertion; and that most people would declare that to be blind in the dark is a very general experience. It is by no means so. There are many people who, like the writer, may possess very strong sight by day, yet are almost blind at night. Oculists may explain the mystery; we cannot. Constantly we have fallen into trouble through this peculiarity of vision—or want of vision; once were saved from drowning by a brother's presence.

H. C., who has cat's eyes in the dark, promised to pilot me—as he has many a time piloted me before; and began his performance

by landing me in a deposit of lime half a yard high. He pretended not to have seen it, but from the periodical bursts of laughter that came from him as he surveyed my deplorable appearance, I doubted the assertion. It was evidently an excellent joke, not at his own expense. It is, however, useless to preach without practising, and I therefore took it philosophically, and pretended to enjoy it also. I confess that if I never felt a hypocrite before, I felt one then.

As we went on, the houses grew fewer and further between; more curious and countrified. One of these was a blacksmith's forge, and as the worthy smithy brought his brawny arm down upon the anvil, the metal rang out upon the night air and the sparks flew upwards. The flames of the forge played upon his face, whilst a young urchin, black as a chimney sweeper, blew the bellows. The man's voice kept rhythm to his strokes in one of the songs of the people. He himself looked worthy of Vulcan, and the scene was fitted for Pandemonium. Why are forges always so interesting? Is it because they are remnants of a barbarous and bygone age—almost the only things that have been in any way handed down to us from a period which seems remote as the Flood, or the Creation, or any other event sufficiently far off to appear to belong to another state of existence and another world?

Beyond the forge was a house, small and low; its walls seemed three feet thick, and it appeared to possess just a but and a ben, as they say in Scotland. In the wall there was a hole about two feet square, open to the elements, without window, without other protection than an outside green shutter, which apparently was never closed, so stiff and rude and rusty was the iron that fastened it to its place.

Framed as it were by this hole in the wall was an old man sitting on a stool within the but—or the ben: I know not how, in Scotland, they distinguish the one from the other. He was cobbling shoes, this patriarch, and was a direct contrast to the smithy, the sound of whose voice and anvil had very distinctly followed us. The cobbler was small and delicate, with pale, refined features. Long white locks fell over a high brow, and over his stooping shoulders. He might have been a genius, this mender of shoes. There was the musical blacksmith, here the poetical cobbler. The one might compose verses, the other set them to melody. He looked nearly a hundred, and probably had seen in a long life the "weight and woe of his errand;" the "much tribulation" all must more or less pass through in their strange, mysterious earthly pilgrimage. His white locks, and, above all, a certain resigned expression, which only comes of long years of care manfully battled with, sufficiently testified to the nature of his past. What his particular cross had been, the face would not tell. Perhaps a shrew of a wife, who had lived all her allotted years and beyond them; perhaps a wife who, the light of his eyes, the loadstar of his heart, had died young and left him to

sadness and solitude—for fate thus deals out her contrary and perplexing measures; we see it every day, and every day we wonder; but all we can do is to live on, and possess our souls in patience, and place our faith in the wisdom of the Unseen. We must not attempt to unravel the mysteries of life.

Or the cobbler of Dreux may have lost his children, and, like Rachel, wept through long years because they were not. Or he may have had a long fight with poverty, which perhaps is a trouble that touches the heart least, yet is hardest of all to bear.

Whatever the cross may have been, there he still was. Probably it had passed away; for extreme old age is resigned. The world is over, the future is all—the strange, unknown future. The long, solitary journey is about to be undertaken. And the cross is then often removed; for life being nearly over, the discipline necessary for earlier years is necessary no longer. No one believes that trouble is sent for any other purpose than discipline.

He worked by the light of a bright lamp, which played upon his face and brought it out in strong relief; well-shaped, clear-cut features, with the wrinkles of age upon cheek and brow, but none of the marks invariably sown by an ill-spent life.

We looked through the hole, and his face was framed within, and ours, as he lifted his head from his work, was framed without. The lamp-light revealed us distinctly. He looked surprised, but only for a moment. His thoughts had evidently been very far off. The old live in the past; their happiness is in retrospection, recollection; the days that have been; their lost youth, lost loves. What have they to do with the present, whose silver cord is loosening, whose pitcher is taking its last journey to the fountain?

He looked up and saw us. And he must have found that our gaze was one of interest, not merely of curiosity; must have seen in our expression a little of the touch of nature, the bond of sympathy "which makes the whole world kin;" for he did not resent our intrusion, but accepted our visit.

"Messieurs are abroad late to-night. It is dark and lonesome."

"We are travellers," we explained; "birds of passage, taking Dreux on our way to Chartres. We are going up the hill to try and get into the Royal Chapel."

"Then you will not succeed," was the consoling reply. "You will have your trouble for your pains. The gates are closed."

"But there is no doubt a concierge?"

"A very dragon," he returned; and by his expression we began to think that his particular cross might have been the long-lived shrew, not the broken dream of short-lived happiness. "A very dragon, as ruthless as fate, as silent as the Delphic Oracle. She will not open the gates for you. She would not open them for the President of the Republic."

We were surprised to hear this old shoemaker quoting mythology

and wondered whether he had always been a maker and mender of shoes. But we had no time to enter into the past; it would probably have been opening the flood-gates of a mighty torrent of recollections. This we would reserve for some possible future visit to Dreux. But we did venture upon a personal remark.

"You seem aged for that sort of work," we observed. "It is almost time you rested from your labours."

"The rest will come soon enough," he replied, with a smile and a dreamy look. "I am eighty-eight years old. People talk of their jubilee, but I have been at my work for seventy-five years. And I have never known want of work; have never had to beg or borrow; Heaven has been good to me. When I can work no longer I shall know that the rest has cŏme. It will then be time to put away, and sing the vesper hymn of my life."

We somehow felt rebuked. Here was so much faith and gratitude; so much contentment with so little to satisfy it. It was a lesson learned by the wayside, and was worth the learning.

We left him to his work, his lamp, his recollections, and went on our way. The houses grew fewer, the road darker. Presently we entered a grove of trees, sombre and mysterious. Utter silence reigned. We were beyond the reach of the harmonious blacksmith; and Dreux, now quite far off, was too quiet a town to send forth the rush and roar of life indulged in by greater cities. It was too dark even for shadows. Not a breath of air stirred the branches of the straight trees so thickly planted together. Everything, even the voices of nature, seemed buried in profound slumber. If there were ghosts lurking about, it was too dark to see them. Perhaps this very grove had been haunted by Druids in the days gone by, and *their* shades might have been flitting about it now; holding revelry amongst the trees, or waiting to show themselves to such wayfarers as had the gift of second sight.

Evidently we had not the gift, for we saw none. But we distinctly felt their influence. The moment we entered the grove we fell under a spell; a strange impression took possession of us; a cold and creepy feeling; a sense of the presence of the mysterious, the supernatural, the invisible to mortal eye. Here, certainly, Druids must have worshipped, and we tried to find traces of the strange menhirs they have left behind them.

We saw nothing, and presently we passed out of the grove and the uncanny influence. The pure, dark sky of heaven was above us. The stars flashed and scintillated. We were at the end of our pilgrimage. Great gates, closed and barred, stood before us. To be or not to be? Should we conquer the dragon?

In the darkness we had to grope for the bell; we could not see it. We found it; and a peal went forth upon the night air and awoke the echoes of the mysterious grove. Silence. Then suddenly, uprising like a Jack-in-the-box, and inspiring us almost with terror, a figure

seemed to spring up from nowhere on to the roof of a little lodge on the left, and the voice of the dragon was heard.

"What do you want?" it said, very sternly and abruptly.

"We want to see the chapel," we replied, in the sweetest tones at our command.

"Impossible," was the answer. "No one is admitted after dark. The gates are closed."

"But we want you to open them for us. You must make us the one exception to your rule. There is no rule without an exception, you know."

Then suddenly there was a step forward, and a female head bent over the roof. It was quite a Romeo and Juliet scene, H. C. whispered—and I was only too happy that he should play Montague to such a Capulet.

"Who has the temerity to make such a request?" asked this Juliet, in apparently the extreme of wrath. "Who bids me unbar the gates, as though he were a monarch of the House I acknowledge?"

"We are not monarchs," we humbly replied. "But we admire and respect your House. We recognise the divine right of kings; we believe in hereditary monarchy. We should not wonder if your House ——"

"Do you think it will ever reign again?" The dragon's voice trembled as she asked the question. We felt we were about to conquer. But our answer must be oracular.

"It may well be," we replied. "Greater wonders are seen every day. Justice is sometimes delayed, but triumphs in the end. Those who live longest see most. We are travellers. This is our first visit to Dreux; it may be our last. We should be disconsolate if we did not pay our respects to the tomb of your House. It is in your power to admit us."

There was a deep sigh: a murmured "If I thought they would reign again I should die happy;" a head suddenly withdrawn; another interval of silence; and then the great gate swung open, we passed within, and the gate closed behind us. There stood the dragon, a bright lamp in hand, smiling and amiable; a dragon no longer.

"You are strange people," she said. "You have mesmerised me. I do not know what your influence is, but I feel bound to obey you. I have never done this for anyone before; I shall never do it for anyone again. Follow me."

And we followed this feminine Diogenes. Her step was light, her carriage was noble. Her lamp gleamed out weirdly in the darkness, faintly lighting up the trees and shrubs about us; casting ghostly shadows around.

It was a strange experience, and we felt curiously about it. But it possessed sufficient of the unusual to make it interesting; was tinged with a romance that redeemed it altogether from the commonplace,

and raised in one the spirit of adventure. There was, indeed, nothing commonplace about Dreux from beginning to end, as we saw it that night.

We passed down the walks and between sombre avenues, following our guide. Now she held high her lamp, casting fitful gleams upon path and trees, and we could have fancied her some ancient vestal virgin on her way to replenish the sacred fires; for dragon as she might be in name and reputation, she was soft and feminine and comely in appearance. From the tower-roof, she had looked portentous, gigantic, threatening; a very gorgon of custodians. We now perceived our error; the obscurity of the night had exaggerated her outlines, as it exaggerates the outlines of cathedrals and mountains, and other majestic objects of art or nature.

If she was a vestal virgin, here was the temple. For suddenly there loomed before us a building, of which we could see nothing but the form. We could not judge of its architecture, which is said to be a mixture of many schools, a pure example of none. Nevertheless, the building looked imposing, and the cupola surmounting it was clearly outlined against the dark sky.

A solemn silence reigned—the silence of the dead. Our guide herself ceased speaking, and evidently felt on hallowed ground. She stood a moment before the great door, then quietly inserted her key, and the door swung noiselessly back upon its hinges. She went before us, carrying the lamp, which dimly lighted up the interior and cast ghostly shadows upon the walls. It seemed richly decorated, and by daylight we could fancy it ornamented to gorgeousness. It is in the form of a Greek Cross; the rotunda is eighty feet high, and the cupola above it forty-three feet in diameter.

"Behold your wish," said our Slave of the Lamp, with a dignity that became the place and the occasion. "You are in the Royal Chapel. It is dedicated to St. Louis. Never before has friend or foe trodden these flags at night under my guidance. You gaze upon a scene unknown to mortal eyes in its present aspect—or I am mistaken."

It was certainly weird enough for the most ghost-loving imagination, and we felt repaid for all our pains and perseverance. It was something, also, to have subdued this dragon.

"Did Louis Philippe found the chapel?" we asked.

"No; it was founded by the old Duchess of Orleans; she lies there," pointing to the apse on the left of the altar; "close to Madame Adélaïde. The statue to her memory is by Barre. The most beautiful statue of all is the Angel of Resignation, sculptured by the Princess Marie of Orleans, afterwards Duchess of Wurtemburg. She too lies there, but on the right, close to Louis Philippe and Marie Amélie, his consort. She was as accomplished as she was good and lovely. It is thought to be finer than her Jeanne d'Arc."

It was certainly very beautiful. As the lamp-light played upon it

and threw up its proportions and its purity in the surrounding gloom, it made a most effective picture. One could almost have fancied it an angel turned to stone; guarding, in motionless silence, the Royal Mausoleum until the day-dawn and the day-star rose upon the world for the last time, and time itself passed into eternity.

In the chapel dedicated to the Virgin, our guide pointed out some rich carving and pendants from the roof, which we could very faintly discern. The windows were of course invisible.

"They are rich and beautiful," she remarked, "though modern. They are the best that Sèvres could produce. It is nearly all due to the King, Louis Philippe, and was designed to replace one destroyed at the Revolution. He was wise. In Paris nothing is safe. Here they rest in peace; the mob will not reach them; even Napoleon III., when he confiscated the possessions of the House of Orleans, spared their tomb. And now it is *his* turn, and he himself lies in a foreign land. Have you seen his mausoleum? I hear that it is magnificent."

Only H. C. had visited the new tomb at Farningham, and declared it to be of great beauty.

"Well, I am not jealous," returned our singular but loyal guide. "I wish him no harm. I think he did good to France for the time being: he would have done more had they allowed him. At least he had not the lives of a countless multitude upon his soul, like the first Napoleon, whom forsooth they call GREAT. You did not think him great, messieurs?"

We could not parley with conscience, and confessed that we thought him very much so.

"Ah, well! we all have our ideas of greatness. For my part I hate wars and rumours of wars, and all those who make them. I have reason. I lost many relatives and friends in battle. The very sound of the cannon fills me with terror. And you have heard them call me a dragon," she comically added, in quite a tone of appeal and remonstrance.

"You are not likely to be much tried by it here," we remarked.

"No. Dreux has seen its trouble and gone through its wars, but they are over. The vultures have changed their scenes of carnage. Our Royal people here rest in peace."

"You are very loyal to them," we observed.

"I would shed my blood for them," replied this faithful geni. "I and mine have known them for generations. It is my ambition and my dream to see them once more in power. Our young Duke has the elements in him of a great king, if only the foolish and frivolous and fickle French nation can be brought to see it."

We were verging on a political discussion; and much as we should have liked to draw out our dragon, we had no time for argument. Besides, they are like squibs in their temperaments, these people; a spark in the shape of a misplaced word may set them blazing. And here we felt ourselves at the mercy of our geni. We were her

prisoners. The great outer gates had closed upon us: a few steps and the chapel doors might roll to on their hinges, and leave us victims to a living tomb: until we became cold and lifeless as the Angel of Resignation near which we were standing.

It was time to leave, moreover. We turned, and again she led the way outward, bearing high her lamp. We formed a singular little procession. It was almost a solemn adventure, made mysterious by the shadows of night. We could only faintly realise the building, but at least we had stood within it. If one day we should see it again when the sun is in its meridian, we shall fancy that we never saw it before. It will wear a new aspect: the darkness of the interior will have given place to light seen through gorgeous coloured glass; sunbeams will dye walls and pavement with rainbow hues: perhaps crown the head and brow of the Angel of Resignation with a golden aureole.

We passed out into the night. The trees about us were stirred with a faint breeze; a gentle murmur seemed to call into question this unusual intrusion. As we went round, the town lay at our feet. Lights flashed and glimmered; we faintly made out the outlines of the great church of St. Peter's. But it was all quiet and silent; apparently a sleeping world. No buzz of life and movement reached us. The great plains lay stretched and invisible under the dark canopy of heaven. Far, far away we saw the faint glimmering of two lights, small as stars. Were they the lamps of our advancing train? For our own sakes we hoped not.

"The great plains of Dreux," exclaimed our geni, solemnly waving her hand around. "The plains where the Journée de Dreux was lost and won, and Catholics and Huguenots fought and slew each other like wild beasts rather than Christians. I have stood here at sunset, and watched the glow spreading itself over the plain, and fancied it to be the life-blood of dying men poured out upon the field of battle. I have imagined the groans of the wounded, the cry of the dying, the despair of the vanquished, the savage triumph of the conquerors. And I have prayed Heaven with all my heart and soul to hasten the time when wars shall cease. For if I had a son, and he fell in conscription and died in battle, his loss would then and there be borne in upon me, and his last hour would be mine also."

A singular character, this woman; a strange, mystical temperament evidently; a woman capable, no doubt, of highest feats of heroism; it might be the desperate feat of a Charlotte Corday, or the fanatical heroism of a Jeanne d'Arc; or, possibly, the more difficult path of the sustained effort of a quiet, life-long, self-sacrificing vocation.

"And now I will tell you a secret," she added in a different tone, in which we detected a sound of humour. "You think I am the dragon. I am not the dragon. The dragon has gone away for three days. I am only a friend of the dragon; like yourselves a bird of passage, whom Dreux knows not, though I have occasionally been

here for a day or two's repose on my way to busier scenes. Had the dragon been here you would not have been admitted. She is my friend, but she is as hard as steel; you could no more turn her than you can turn the tide. But when you pleaded in those dulcet tones" —we bowed low—"I had not the heart to refuse you. Where was the harm? We have both enjoyed our little visit and interview, and you have not had your walk in vain. And now you have only time to catch your train for Chartres; and I must dismiss you with my benediction."

Singular woman! Strange, interesting character! H. C., who spreads his favours broadcast upon the earth, and, like the Apostles of old, thinks everyone should possess all things in common, would have pressed a substantial remembrance upon her. I saw the gleam of gold flash in the lamplight. I think she understood by intuition his motive, and the largeness of his heart, for she was not offended.

"Nay," she remonstrated, with strange yet gentle dignity; "do not mistake me; spare your alms for those who are in need. It was not for that I admitted you. Do not spoil our little interview by thoughts of earthly gain. You betray sympathy in your tone and faces. I see that you are the friends, not the enemies of mankind: let me think of you as two friends to whom I have rendered a small service; whom perchance in the future I may come across at a time when I shall sorely need it returned. For life is full of strange encounters and coincidences, and greater marvels happen every day than that you and I should meet again. And now, farewell: and in your kindly thoughts, and sometimes in your prayers, remember the name of your guide."

"And that name?" we naturally asked.

She paused a moment; seemed taking counsel with herself, battling with some strange emotion. Then, appearing to take a sudden resolution, she spoke:

"Why should I not tell you? There is that in your face I would trust for ever. We are of those who read faces. You are passing away; you will keep my secret. Listen—and wonder."

She stooped and whispered a few words in our ear.

Astonishment took possession of us. We felt ourselves turn pale; a wave of emotion surged through us; we grasped the small and delicate hand that was held out to us, baring our head and bowing low.

"But how——" we began.

"Not a word," she interrupted; "not a question. Depart in peace. Do not forget me, or this night. If ever we should meet in the great world, remember that we are friends. Farewell."

We passed away from the presence of this strange and singular being. The door closed behind us, and we were alone with the night. We were as one in a dream. For a time we were both silent. We passed through the Druid-haunted grove, but forgot to look for shades. Our late singular experience and interview—above

all that last and wonderful disclosure—had taken possession of us. We would not have missed it for the world; nay, far rather would have put up with the inconvenience of a night at Dreux.

But this was not to be our fate. We reached the railway station, and found we were a good quarter of an hour before our time; and the porter had been true to his charge. He indeed did not refuse a remembrance at the prodigal hands of H. C., but this time it was silver, not gold.

The train came up; we entered with our numerous packages, and steamed away.

And now, reader, I have an apology to offer thee. I had almost promised to show thee Chartres in this paper; had thought to do so; and behold the pen has run away with its subject, and has kept us lingering at Dreux. I have not even views to offer thee; for being night we could not sketch. Moreover, I knew not that Dreux would prove a theme so long drawn out. We cannot even give thee sketches from memory, for it is the eleventh hour, and merciless printers have waxed impatient. Time is ended. I shall not even be treated to that doubtful compliment from amiable friends, who, had I been born conceited (which Heaven forbid), would long since have landed me in the sackcloth and ashes of humility. "We like your papers," say they, "*the pictures are so pretty!*" If they tried for a hundred years, could they find a more self-subduing, a more crushing speech? By mere chance H. C. had sketched the town hall, and so with it I am able to strike the key-note of my paper; but that is all. I have endeavoured to give you a few word pictures of scenes which occupied our two hours at Dreux; a dark night's scenes which left a peculiarly vivid and pleasant, an unfading impression upon us; but I feel only too acutely that *the other pictures are wanting*. If, reader, thou possessest neither the amiability of a saint nor the patience of Job—to which we have already alluded—in charity accord me what thou canst. There are such things as repentance in the present and amendment in the future. Of the one I am certain—I will endeavour to bring forth the other.

A SONG OF LIFE.

When on the dimpled cheek of youth
Health's blooming roses blow;
When songs of rapture, hope and truth
From lips of beauty flow;
When youthful feet right gaily bound
Where thorn nor tare appears,
How joyously the days go round—
The weeks, the months, the years.

The youth beholds with fearless eye
The lofty hill of fame;
And hopes upon its summit high
E'er long to carve his name!
Joy thrills his heart—in every sound
Fame's bugle call he hears;
And merrily the days go round—
The weeks, the months, the years.

The lady of his love must prove
A queen of beauty rare;
No vain coquette—but wise in love,
And true as she is fair;
Amid the tender stars at night
He sees her dear eyes shine,
As with a trusting, fond delight
He worships at her shrine.

But when the furrowed cheek of age
Care's hollow wrinkles show,
The old man turns his life's last page
With trembling hand and slow;
Dark lower the skies—in every sound
Death's mournful dirge he hears,
And wearily the days go round—
The weeks, the months, the years.

The old man sees through tear-blurred eye
The lofty hill of fame,
Where cherished hopes in ruin lie,
Where none may mark his name;
One little, lonely, nameless mound
At every step appears,
As mournfully the days go round,
The weeks, the months, the years.

The lady of his love, alas,
Hath closed her weary eyes,
With but one tiny tuft of grass
To show him where she lies;
"Old wife of mine," he whispers low,
"Above thy grave I see
The star of faith, whose beams I know
Shall guide me soon to thee."

Fanny Forrester.

THE LOVELY WIDOW.

THE funeral was over. Very childish-looking was the figure of the widow, whose golden hair resisted the stern efforts made that day to brush its soft rings into straight and severe lines. The baby sweetness of her large blue eyes was veiled by drooping lids and dark, curling lashes, as she sat silent and quiet in the dining-room of a well-furnished house, and listened while the sharp, business-like voice of the lawyer announced that all the property the deceased Edward Grant died possessed of was left for the sole and undisputed use of "his dear wife Florence Adelaide."

Opposite the window sat the bolt upright figure of the dead man's mother, a strong-minded woman anyone could see, and as capable a manager of business as most men. She was turned seventy, but might pass for fifty-five anywhere. She steadily regarded the lawyer while he read, and when he had finished adjusted her spectacles more firmly, and looked at her daughter-in-law; the latter simply thanked the lawyer for his explanations, begged him to partake of refreshment, and then in subdued quietness left the room, two servants following her respectfully.

Alone with the old lady, the lawyer helped himself to a large glass of port and a biscuit, and between the sips and munches deplored in short, brisk sentences the sudden demise of his excellent client, and the uncertainty of human life generally.

"Did you make that will, Mr. Phipps?" asked old Mrs. Grant, abruptly.

"I did, madam; indeed, I may say that I have transacted all legal business for your lamented son for five-and-twenty years."

"I know that. Edward wasn't a man to change, and a more sensible man than he was until he was five-and-forty never lived."

"Five and forty? Let me see; he was that some ten months ago."

"He was; and then he fell in love with the doll face of a governess, and made a fool of himself," snapped the old lady, taking off her spectacles and rubbing them vigorously.

"Well, well, madam," said the lawyer, shaking his head with an indulgent smile as he poured out another glass of wine, "we all have our weak moments; and, by jove! Mrs. Edward would excuse a good deal of folly—lovely creature!"

"Bah! you're all alike!" cried Mrs. Grant, viciously. "Now tell me, can that girl make ducks and drakes of all my poor son's property if she chooses?"

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"Everything is hers—those are the terms of the will. We will hope, however, that with so capable an adviser as yourself, the charming young widow will manage well and comfortably. Good-morning, madam! My train starts ten minutes hence, and business awaits me. Always happy to be of service to any of my late client's family."

So he bowed himself off, and Mrs. Grant put the wine away in an old-fashioned cellaret. This she locked, and removed the bunch of keys to a basket on the table. Then she stood and looked round at the massive old furniture, soliloquising.

"As good now as it was in his father's time, and valuable. I've nothing like it in my house. Hope Florence will look after things—and of course she can't live here alone. Humph!"

With this audible grunt, the erect old lady strode into the hall, which was cold and gloomy. On the opposite side was the drawing-room door, which she opened, and found the room fireless and empty; the blinds not yet drawn up.

"Florence is in her room, I suppose," she thought, standing irresolute. "Shall I go to her? Perhaps better not. There's never been much feeling between us, though I'd be willing to overlook that now," and she rang the bell.

With painfully hushed footsteps—for the sense of death still lingered in the house—the parlour-maid answered the summons.

"I'm going home now, Janet; will you ask your mistress if I shall come up to her, or whether she'd rather see me to-morrow?"

"Yes, ma'am."

In a minute Janet fluttered back.

"Please, ma'am, my mistress says she would be glad to see you in the morning."

"Very well—bring my umbrella and cloak, Janet; it rains a little now, I see."

And the tall old lady walked forth, and soon reached a small neat house, surrounded by a prim suburban garden, where a servant, nearly as old as herself, must have been on the watch, for the door was held open as she passed in at the gate.

Silently and kindly the cloak was removed, and then Maria followed her mistress into the neat, prim drawing-room, where a bright fire burned.

"You'll be liking a cup of tea, ma'am, and it's ready for you."

"Yes, Maria; a cup of tea."

Old Mrs. Grant untied her bonnet strings, took off a knitted wrapper, and seated herself in a formal, high-backed arm-chair, resting her withered hands on the arms, and looking straight and steady at the fire. Maria brought the tea and a pair of slippers. These she put on for her mistress, and then watched her drink the tea in silence.

At last she spoke.

"Well, ma'am, it's all over then—I watched them pass to the cemetery."

Mrs. Grant bowed her head.

"Yes, it's over. They managed very well; everything quiet and decent, as *he* had wished it." And the old eyes tried to look as steady at the fire as before.

"Oh, ma'am, but it has been a bitter day for you that saw him buried!" said the servant, in sympathising earnestness.

The tender words broke down the mother's stern self-restraint. She wept long, and moaned the name of her son.

Edward Grant had been a very uninteresting person to the world at large. A plain man of middle age, sufficiently well to do as a merchant to keep up the substantial respectability in which his father had lived before him, and with no desire for any of the show and luxury in which his neighbours indulged—many of them poorer than he. To his mother he had been everything, for she had no other child, and Maria had nursed him as an infant, scolded him as a schoolboy, and worshipped him all his life. To both these women the day when he arrived from Paris, bringing with him a lovely bride, of whom they had heard nothing, was remembered as the blackest in their calendar. It was Edward Grant's one grand error in his mother's eyes. She could have welcomed a wife of her own choosing, but this one of his found no favour in her eyes. It took but a few days to remove from the large house which had been her husband's, and to settle in a cottage—firm refusal to share her son's home being given. With her retired Maria, in grim contempt of the follies of men. And, after all, he had not lived a year with his young wife when death came!

So the two old women wept together over the memory of the dead man, and Maria heard that his will left everything to his wife.

"Not that I wanted anything," said the mother, amid her tears; "I've enough and to spare; but there's no mention of me! Maybe I was too hard on them."

Maria glowered at the fire, and said, emphatically:

"She's a deep one! I always said it!"

II.

"Florence," the old lady was saying, nervously, "we have not been much to each other—but he we both loved is gone, and I'd be glad to help you if I could."

The lovely face showed no signs of desire to reciprocate. The deep blue eyes had a light in them that made them almost black.

"You are very good—but there is nothing you can do for me." Old Mrs. Grant winced.

"You can't forgive me yet, but there are things I might do for you. This large house and furniture need care, and so young a widow cannot live alone."

"I don't intend to live alone. I am going to my friends abroad," announced the widow.

"Abroad!" cried the old lady, aghast. "Why should you go abroad, and you so comfortably—so generously left?" For in Mrs. Grant's eyes, going abroad to live meant being too poor to exist respectably in England.

Florence waited a second, and then said in concentrated, delibe rate tones:

"I have never been happy here. I hate the place, the house, the furniture. I am going to sell the house and furniture."

Mrs. Grant groaned, and sat erect.

"Florence, you can think of selling what my Edward's father worked for! You cannot have loved your husband!"

Firmly the lovely blue eyes met hers.

"You are right. I did not love my husband, and he knew that when he married me."

The old lady rose to go, nervously clutching her cloak together as she spoke.

"Farewell, then. If you did not deceive him, I can forgive you; but from my heart I pity him. And he my only son."

A few days after the big house was shut up, and the widow went forth, leaving instructions with her lawyer to sell up the property.

III.

It is a year later, and we find ourselves in a charming country mansion, where a blooming young matron has entered the dining-room before any of her guests have appeared for breakfast. Mrs. Lovell smiles as she looks at the long rows of cups she will presently be filling, for she loves a full house—and especially in the hunting season, when the only alloy to her pleasure is the fear that her young husband may meet with an accident. To-day, too, her only brother, Captain Melville, who arrived from the Continent late the night before, will be one of the party.

Gradually the ladies dropped in—two of them in riding habits—and then the men looked pleasantly at the dainty table and plentiful sideboard, and conversed in jerks amid the pleasures of eating.

"Not a scrap of frost," said Mrs. Lovell, brightly. "How you riders will enjoy it. Where is the meet, Tom?"

"At Elversly," said her husband—"quite a safe ride, I assure you."

"No doubt. You ought to be grateful for my anxiety."

"Yes," said Kate Lee, one of the riders; "look at Major Dale."

"No, don't look at me!" observed that gentleman, who entered at the moment. "I don't think I could stand it if you all looked at me!"

"I was only contrasting your fate with Mr. Lovell's," pursued Kate, coolly; "and was going to say no one cared whether you rode

hard or not!" but she flushed as the tall, fair-bearded man answered:

"Oh, don't they? that's all you know about it! I'll convince you some day, when I'm not so hungry as I am now."

"Is Archie down yet? No, I see he isn't!" said Mrs. Lovell. "He can't mean to ride this morning."

"I'm so sorry," cried the curly-haired eldest boy, aged seven, "for I'm going—and Uncle Archie's such fun."

"Never mind, Tommy!" said Kate, "I'm going also."

"You're no good, Kate, because I mean to ride at everything."

"Bravo! Tommy, but will the Shetland do it?" asked Major Dale.

"Of course," replied Tommy, contemptuously.

Just as the hunting party prepared to start, Archie Melville sauntered in.

"Going to ride?" asked his brother-in-law, hastily collecting some small articles in the way of flasks, etc., for his friends.

"No. I shall stay at home and bother Jennie."

"Welcome," said Mrs. Lovell, laughing. "Now, my friends, you ought to start. Do be careful, Tom," in a whisper.

"I will, dear—Tommy and I will keep together," laughed her lord.

By the time Captain Melville had finished breakfast, his sister was disengaged to follow him to a pretty morning-room, where he sank in a low wicker-work lounge and declared himself content with the world. He had, however, an evident purpose in view, as his sister, who knew him thoroughly, soon divined.

After a few minutes' chat on indifferent subjects, Archie said:

"By the way, don't you remember that pretty Madame de Crespigny?"

"Yes," said Jennie; "she was a distant cousin of our mother's, and married a Frenchman—what about her?"

"Nothing much about her, for she is dead and her husband too; but they lost all their money, and their only daughter, named Florence—"

"Mamma's name," interrupted Jennie, gently.

"Yes, I thought of that," responded Archie, with a look of soft remembrance towards his sister. "Well, this poor girl was sixteen when they died, and went as nursery governess to an English family. Three years after she married an English merchant, who died a year ago."

"Poor thing!" said Jennie.

"Well, he left her provided for—but she had no friends in England, and I met her in Paris, where she resides with an unlovely old maiden aunt, a sister of her father's."

"Dear me! And was she nice, Archie?" asked Jennie, demurely.

"Oh, fairly. But, Jennie, I was thinking it would be kind of you if you asked her on a little visit here."

"Oh!" said Jennie, and her pretty mouth twitched roguishly. "So *that's* why you did not go hunting this morning?"

"Stuff, Jennie," said Archie, rising impatiently; "it's nothing to me. Only as there *is* a sort of connection with our family——"

"Oh, but there's a much nearer connection with old Mrs. Todd and her two fat daughters—you never asked me to invite *them!*" cried Jennie, provokingly.

"Very well—*I* don't care," said Archie shrugging his shoulders. "Only I thought you might oblige me, as I've met Mrs. Grant and mentioned you to her."

"All right, Archie," said Jennie, laughing, "it shall be done." She seated herself at the writing-table, obtained particulars, wrote a pretty note, and was rewarded by a brotherly embrace.

A few days later a young Oxford student, who was idling a few days at Lovell Park, tumbled headlong into the billiard-room with a face full of news. It was the hour before dressing for dinner.

"The carriage has just come from the station, and there's the loveliest girl in it you ever saw!"

"That *you* ever saw, you mean, Neal!" responded Major Dale, calmly continuing his game; "for how can you tell what lovely girls *I* may have seen?"

"Oh, you never think anyone pretty!" said the youth impatiently; "but anyone else would call this girl a beauty. Who is she, Captain Melville?"

"I must see her before answering," said Archie, lighting a fresh cigar. "I didn't know any girls were expected."

The fever of youth could not be calmed, and Tom Neal ran off to where some of the ladies were assembled—but not the new arrival. There, however, he learnt that the stranger was a widow, a Mrs. Grant, and darted back to the billiard-room to tell his success.

"Oh, our cousin, Mrs. Grant," said Archie, trying to look unconscious, but missing a good stroke with the effort.

"Man! you've lost it!" cried Major Dale, disappointedly. "I wish, Neal, you'd admire your girls and widows without spoiling a good game." And just then the dressing-bell sounded, and all wandered away to attire for the comforts of the evening. In a corridor Archie met his sister coming from her guest's room.

"Archie, she's lovely! I don't wonder you wanted to see her again!"

"Nonsense, Jennie!" But he looked pleased, nevertheless.

When Mrs. Edward Grant came down to dinner she created a sensation. The extreme childish innocence of her great beauty made its chief attraction. A soft white tulle edition of a widow's cap lay lightly on the silken rings of bright gold hair which curled and twisted round her pretty head, and the picture attained was that of a lovely child who was playing at widowhood! Everyone was struck with her, and the young Oxonian was triumphant.

Several ladies depreciated Mrs. Grant behind their fans, but one, Kate Lee, who had been the beauty till the widow came, calmly declared in an undertone to her sister:

"That sort of thing is unapproachable! How exquisitely her black dress fits!"

It was soon clear to men and women alike that their hostess's brother was hopelessly in love; and there was such a tender, appealing look in the lovely face, no one wondered. Only Major Dale, who was known to be cynical, refrained from expressing approval. In fact, it seemed as if he regretted his friend's infatuation, and would have saved him from pursuing it if he could. However, sometimes Cupid comes with slow and sure footsteps, at others in such certain leaps there is no time to think or check the tide; and before a week of Mrs. Grant's visit was over, Captain Melville had proposed and been accepted, although it was but a year since the lamented Mr. Grant had died.

The widow's cap was discarded, and her short golden hair regained its freedom. Also, a dove-coloured silk replaced her mourning on the evening when the engagement was made known. Major Dale looked on while others admired, and only asked Kate Lee drily if "widows always brought such a convenient change of garments with them?"

"I don't know much about widows," said Kate, calmly; "but very few are so fair as this one."

It was not many days before Archie confided to Major Dale that he had begged for an early wedding-day, and that the Lovells had arranged for the event to take place at their house a few days after Christmas. He concluded by asking him to be best man on the occasion.

"Very well; with pleasure," said Major Dale, but his face looked less satisfied than his words sounded.

"Come and spend your Christmas with us," said Mr. Lovell, genially.

"I would gladly," said Major Dale, "but I am expecting a man I used to know years ago to stay with me. He has been abroad a couple of years, and has just come into a baronetcy."

"Bring him, too." And that settled the matter.

IV.

THREE days before Christmas, and amid all the merriment and confusion of a country mansion at that time, the lovely widow continued to amass and to pack an elaborate trousseau. In vain Archie pleaded that it would really be possible to purchase garments at some future day in the course of her life; still the heaps of clothing increased as if a siege were impending, and Mrs. Grant only shook her head smilingly, and promised her dejected intended the devotion

of all her time when once the important question of clothes was settled. She was reclining in a lounge, partaking of five o'clock tea with Mrs. Lovell and some other ladies, when Mr. Lovell entered.

"Dale has just come, and brought his friend."

"Oh," said Mrs. Lovell, rising hospitably, to be ready to welcome her guests. "What is the friend's name, dear?"

"Sir Arthur Belmont."

"Dear me, Mrs. Grant!" cried a stout, fussy lady; "how did you manage it? The cup broken, and the tea all over your lovely gown!"

"Excuse me—so very awkward—that lovely cup!" murmured Mrs. Grant, hurriedly getting up.

"Never mind the cup, Florence," said Mrs. Lovell, magnanimously, for it was one of a valuable set; "but let us ring for your maid to save the gown."

"No, no; let me run away for a few minutes." And she gracefully escaped at one door as Major Dale and Sir Arthur Belmont entered at the other.

Just before dinner, Archie met Mrs. Grant's maid running down a passage, with a note in her hand. Florence often sent him billet-doux, and he stopped hesitatingly.

"Were you coming to me, Drew?"

"No, sir, only to one of the ladies," said Drew, smiling.

He passed on, and when Drew had watched him out of sight, she went swiftly towards the room prepared for Sir Arthur Belmont. The door was ajar, and peeping in, Drew saw the room was empty. She entered quickly, and laid her note on the dressing-table, escaping, as she thought, unseen.

That evening, when the party assembled for dinner, Major Dale's eyes watched keenly the introduction between Sir Arthur Belmont and the fair widow.

The baronet was a much shorter man than Captain Melville, and not nearly so good-looking. His face was dark, the brow lowering and eyes deep-set. There was considerable power in the countenance, and a dogged resolution which would overcome most obstacles. When he was introduced to Mrs. Grant, his brow was grave and unconcerned, and he speedily returned to a conversation with his host. The widow herself looked bewilderingly lovely, graceful and unconscious, and smiled delightfully into the eyes of her fiancé when he presented her with the choicest flower of which he had robbed his sister's conservatory. Archie looked beamingly handsome, and his natural gaiety was heightened by the influence of the near approach of his marriage. To his mind everything that mortal man could wish for lay within his reach.

Major Dale was puzzled and watchful. He had been Archie's schoolfellow and friend through life, and things were going in a way to cause grave doubts and conjectures. His room adjoined Sir Arthur

Belmont's, and he had been writing a letter with the door of communication open when Mrs. Grant's maid entered and laid the note on the table. The subsequent meeting in the drawing-room had puzzled him.

A thoroughly English Christmas was celebrated, Mr. Lovell having invited a number of relatives to dinner besides the guests in the house. The children made noise enough to show they were enjoying a season devoted to their pleasure, and everyone made merry. Under cover of the general excitement, the occasionally pre-occupied and anxious manner of the bride was not noticed.

At last the day before the wedding came. At breakfast the guests found their letters, and Sir Arthur Belmont announced that his conveyed a necessity for immediate departure to town. There were polite regrets of course, but Major Dale felt instinctively glad. Mrs. Grant was not down at breakfast, and directly after the baronet departed.

Archie amused himself by writing large labels for Florence's innumerable packages, addressing them to "Mrs. Melville, Langham Hotel," and then wandered aimlessly about amid the general confusion. Mrs. Grant came down to dinner, after a severe day's work, she said, which accounted for her pale cheeks and weary manner.

"Good-bye, then, till to-morrow," said Archie, bending his handsome head to claim a lover's privilege.

"Good-bye, Archie."

The words were murmured by pale lips, and Mrs. Grant shivered —upon which Archie tenderly wrapped her shawl round her, and stood to watch her ascend the broad staircase with a gaze of passionate admiration.

There was a cold and uncomfortable confusion at the breakfast-table next morning. Mrs. Lovell had breakfasted early in her room, and so three pretty bridesmaids—who were shivering at the thought of the damp country church—tried to make the table as cheerful as usual, and failed. Archie looked in, having satisfied himself, by questioning Drew, that the luggage was all ready. When the hundredth opening of his watch assured him that in half-an-hour the carriages would be at the door, he bethought him of a message he had to send to Florence, and rapidly ascended the stairs. At the top, looking white and frightened, stood his sister Jennie, in close, agitated conversation with Major Dale, whose face was set and stern. Both started as Archie approached.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, Archie, I don't know—I can't think!" cried Jennie, clasping her hands, and tears pouring down her cheeks.

"Tell me at once!" exclaimed Archie, fiercely; "is Florence ill?" And not waiting for an answer, he dashed on towards her room. Major Dale followed him quickly, and they found the door locked.

"The balcony!" said Archie, as he swiftly sped through his sister's

boudoir, out on to the balcony, and thence to the window of Florence's room. It was unfastened, and the room empty. Everything was in confusion, but on the table lay a letter Florence had sat up late to write, and addressed to Captain Melville. He tore it open, and found that his bride had fled to become the wife of the rich baronet, who had been a poor younger son in the family where she had been governess, and who had been her lover in those old days before she married Mr. Grant.

"Forgive me, Archie, if you can. I loved him when I was only sixteen, but we were both poor, and he dared not offend his parents by marrying a governess. When I saw him again, I knew no other marriage was possible for me, and had not courage to tell you—"

"So that is done!" said Archie, with bitter calm.

"Archie," said Major Dale, with fervent sympathy, "it is a horrible affair now—but, mark my words, you are saved from marrying the most heartless woman who ever wore an angel's face! *If Belmont had not become a rich man*—and she only heard of his accession to his poor brother's property since her visit here—Mrs. Grant would have married you."

Jennie stole in with awed face and tearful anxiety. He took her hand.

"There will be no wedding, Jennie; we have lost our bride." And the strong man broke down, and ended his troubles in an illness of many weeks, where the events that had caused it pursued him as phantoms of horror in every grotesque variety.

Beautiful amongst many beauties reigned Lady Belmont—but her treachery was avenged; for the man she married possessed neither principle nor tenderness, and soon wearied of her. Archie, some years later, married Rose Lee, the pretty younger sister of Major Dale's bride, Kate; and the episode of the fair widow's visit to Lovell Park is never alluded to by the family of the man she injured.

MINNIE DOUGLAS.

ODE TO MORNING.

Youth of the day, delightful morn!
  Thy early beams displayed,
On balmy wings of Zephyrs borne,
With blushing light the world adorn
  And spread o'er hill and glade.

Before thy beams the clouds retire,
  The glittering stars decay;
Thy glorious light, thy radiant fire
With life the slumbering world inspire
  And drive the dews away.

For thee, combined, the feathered race
  A general chorus sings,
To hail thy bright, refulgent face,
While, floating through the ethereal space,
  Th' echoing music rings.

At thy return the tulip's bloom
  A vivid splendour shows;
The balmy breezes shed perfume,
The fields their wonted charm assume,
  And varying sweets disclose.

The leaves that sip the silver dew,
  The buds and blooming flowers
Once more their heavenly tints renew;
Once more, fresh opening to our view,
  Shake off the pearly showers.

Oh, hear the lark! In time be wise,
  And bless the new-born day
Ye heedless mortals, hear and rise,
While morning paints the eastern skies,
  And rules with mildest sway.

M. F. W.

"The balmy breezes shed perfume,
The fields their wonted charm assume,
And varying sweets disclose."

A SPIRITUALISTIC PHOTOGRAPHER

I HAD sold out of the army, and being decidedly invalided after a ten years' sojourn in India and the Mauritius, my doctor, immediately after my return to England, ordered me to Bath for a course of the waters. One morning, a few weeks after my arrival, to my great delight and astonishment, I knocked up against the Colonel of my former regiment—a fine soldierly man, some twenty years my senior, but with whom I had always been on terms of intimacy. After a brief chat, he asked me where I was staying, and then invited me to take luncheon with him at the York Hotel. This I gladly accepted; and, the meal over, we settled down comfortably to our cigars (at least I did; for the Colonel I cannot say quite so much). He seemed, after the first excitement of our meeting was over, to have grown restless and pre-occupied; so much so, in fact, that at length, presuming upon my old freedom, I banteringly asked if anything were the matter.

He replied to my question Dutch fashion by asking another.

"Do you ever go in for spiritualism now? You took such an interest in it formerly."

"No," I replied. "I gave it up a long time ago."

"Then you were not convinced by what you had seen and heard?"

"I really don't quite know," was my rejoinder. "That there is a great deal of humbug and deception about it I am thoroughly convinced; and, at the same time, that there is much that cannot be explained is almost equally certain; but where the *unreal* leaves off and the *real* begins is more than I can hazard an opinion upon. What do you think, Colonel?"

"I don't know either," he replied, thoughtfully. "Perhaps you have heard of Professor X——?" (giving the name of one of the greatest advocates of the doctrine of the day. I am writing of some ten years ago, remember).

I nodded assent.

"Well, he is here. I have doubts and beliefs, as you say you have, but I have been thinking the matter over a great deal lately, and have resolved to put them to the test once and for all to-day. I have made an appointment with him for four o'clock. Will you come also?"

"What are his terms?" I began cautiously.

"Five guineas a sitting."

"Wheugh! quite enough to raise or settle one's doubts for ever. However, as mine want arranging one way or the other, I'll come."

Accordingly, a few minutes before the appointed time, we left the

hotel, and proceeded to the house, or rather the rooms (he was only making Bath a halting place) of the Professor. The Colonel sent up his card and we were immediately ushered into a semi-darkened room containing only a few chairs, a camera, and the artist himself. He advanced to meet us as we entered the room, bowed, and then looked inquiringly at me.

"Captain Farquharson, a friend of mine," began the Colonel.

"Also a believer?"

"Partially so," I here put in hastily. "At least, I have doubts which I am waiting for you to dispel."

He bowed again, and then motioning the Colonel into a chair placed in front of the camera, continued gravely:

"Whether your doubts will be aroused or dispelled is more than I can say—so much depends upon yourselves in a matter like this; for just as my camera is dependent upon the assistance of the sun, so am I only an instrument in your hands. However, if you give me, and the subject upon which I am engaged, your undivided attention for the space of a few minutes, the end cannot help but be a successful one."

He spoke earnestly and with the quiet force of a man who believes perfectly in the truth of the words he utters. "Now, gentlemen," he continued, "I want you to concentrate your whole powers of thought upon the person you wish depicted. I need scarcely tell you that it must be upon one who has already joined the land of spirits. I am, as I said once before, only an instrument in your hands, and upon *your* powers of will rests entirely the failure or success of the whole undertaking. Are you ready?"

"I am ready." Something in the tone of the Colonel's voice made me look up and regard him attentively. Yes, there was no doubt about his being ready. He was leaning forward a little in his chair, his right hand supporting his forehead, the eyes slightly downcast, while every muscle in his body seemed rigid and immovable. A wonderful will-power this man possessed; and yet with it all, he was tender and merciful as a woman. No wonder that he had gained the entire trust and confidence of the men under his command, while amongst women he was simply idolised; and yet he had never married. Once or twice, with the rashness of youth, I had felt tempted to chaff him upon the subject, but something, I cannot quite explain what, had held me back; and so the question of his celibacy was still unasked.

The sharp click of the cap being placed upon the camera, and a heavy, long-drawn sigh from the Colonel, brought me back again to the present. He had risen from his chair, and stood now, drawn up to his full height, in the middle of the room. His face was still set, although the muscles were slowly relaxing, but the eyes had a strange far-away look in them that was almost painful to see. He shivered slightly, and seemed quite oblivious of my presence as he turned and walked slowly towards the chair which I had just vacated.

At this moment the Professor returned from his inner sanctum, and, glancing across at me, said: "Your turn now, sir."

An uncanny sort of feeling seemed to come over me, and I could not help wishing that I had let the entire thing alone. But I could not now draw back with credit to myself or my profession either; so I took the empty chair with the air and resignation of a martyr, devoutly hoping that my face gave no indication of the tumult raging within.

"Are you ready, sir?"

"Quite ready," and, with the words, I tried to give myself up thoroughly to the undertaking, keeping my mind fixed upon a brother who had died some years previously in Canada, and of whom (to the regret of us all, but more especially of my mother, whose youngest son he was) we had no portrait. The next few seconds I cannot clearly describe. To say that I felt hot and cold by turns, and that every vein in my body seemed at bursting point, is nothing compared with the uncomfortable sensations that seemed to possess me. It was really horrible, and I had to use my utmost force of control to keep myself from groaning aloud. Suddenly the welcome click of the cap told me I might be "off guard once more," and beating a somewhat hasty and un-soldier-like retreat from my present position, am not ashamed to confess that I felt quite glad to see the face of my old friend the Colonel again. He seemed to have quite recovered from the effects of his sitting, as, with a friendly nod, he pushed forward a chair for my use.

"I don't quite like it," I began—but at this moment I was interrupted by the return of the Professor, who, holding a negative in his hand, advanced towards the middle of the room. He held it to the light for a second or two, and then, gently passing his hand over it, addressed the Colonel.

"You are quite sure of the person you wished depicted?"

"Quite sure," came the decided answer.

"Then is this the one you thought of?"

The Colonel took the photograph from his hand deliberately, but after one glance at it, his nerves seemed to have deserted him altogether. The old dazed look had come back into his eyes and the colour fled from cheek and lip as he sank into a chair, muttering hoarsely:

"Merciful Heaven, it is she—it is she!"

That the shock was a great one there could be no doubt of, but as he still held the photograph in front of him I could not advance to render any assistance, not knowing but that the affair might be one he would prefer keeping to himself. I did therefore the next best, and, in short, the only thing I could do under the circumstances by trying to recall him to the present.

"You are ill, Colonel. Can I do anything for you?"

He turned and looked at me as I spoke but gave no heed to the

question. However, the expression on his face was neither a startled nor unhappy one, and it could not have been a fancy that the mouth had a softer and tenderer look upon it than usual.

At this moment the Professor returned and, placing the second negative in my hand, whispered as he nodded in the Colonel's direction :

"No failure *there*, I fancy."

The next moment he might have looked and said the same of me, had I had eyes to see or ears to hear with, for standing out boldly from the negative was an exact counterpart of myself, every nerve stretched to its utmost tension and with the wearied and troubled expression that had been only too true an index of the feelings I had experienced in that chair of painful memories. While standing behind me, a little to the right and slightly leaning in my direction, was a perfect likeness of my brother as I had last seen him prior to his departure for America. Not that this second figure was as distinct and clearly defined as my own—it seemed rather as though a fine and almost imperceptible gauze had been drawn over it; and yet there the figure stood; as easily recognisable to my eyes as it was to those of my mother—to whom, at a later period, and without giving any previous account of the story I am now relating, I showed it. I was so entirely taken up with the surprise and mystification of my own thoughts as to have forgotten the Colonel altogether until a hand on my shoulder and a voice in my ear recalled me to the present.

"Farquharson, you came here with me against your will, and so it is but fair that I reward you with a sight of the photograph which upset me so much."

As he placed the negative in my hand, I started back in astonishment, for there sat the Colonel as I have before described him, while bending over, and with the action of one who has a pleasant secret to whisper, was the lithe, graceful figure of a *coloured* woman (*girl*, I ought rather to say, for she could not have counted more than sixteen or seventeen years at the utmost), and a beautiful woman too; with delicate, sensitive nostrils, and happy, smiling lips; but these counted as nothing beside the wonderful depths of the dreamy eyes from which a soul of rare purity and unbounded faith seemed still to be looking out.

"But, Colonel," I began, when surprise would allow me to speak: "this is a *coloured* woman!"

"Yes," he replied, gravely; "she belonged to a little story in my life, and was very dear to me indeed."

And so this accounted for the Colonel's celibacy.

I have my brother's photograph by me now—at my mother's death it was returned to me, for she could never be persuaded to part with it during her lifetime.

And doubtless the Colonel has his also.

IN THE PRIMROSE TIME.

A COPPICE in a sheltered nook of the hill-side. On the high downs above the bare trees were bowing before the strong March wind, while the chalky roads were sending up the ransoms of many kings in white blinding clouds of March dust; but down in the sunshiny shelter below, the chestnuts put forth their tiny green fans, the pussy-willows along the bed of the stream opened their silvery catkins, and pale primroses lifted up their starry faces from the brown drift of last year's fallen leaves.

A girl sat singing to herself at the foot of a tree, her lap heaped with primroses, which she was tying up as she sang, only stopping now and then to lift her face to the sky, where the lark, a mile aloft, was sending down a rain of melody. Then her voice, clear and strong, went shrilling higher and higher as if in challenge, breaking off, now into a brilliant roulade, now into a little school song.

She looked like a primrose herself, as she sat amongst the brown leaves with her delicate pale face, her starry eyes and hair of palest gold. She was poorly dressed, but a subtle refinement pervaded her voice and movements. "Cuckoo, cuckoo!" came in a jubilant note from the tree-tops. "Cuckoo!" she sang merrily in response, and "Cuckoo, cuckoo, spring-time is come," sang a chorus of children's voices, and a little procession wound its way in and out between the brown tree trunks; all tiny children led by Baby Nell, holding up a scrap of a blue skirt full of marsh marigolds. All the rest carried primroses in their sunburnt little paws.

"See, Nansie, all these! Won't the ladies be pleased! This will fill the basket when we've brought the moss."

"May we go and get the palms now? The boys must do the cutting, mustn't they?"

"We won't spoil the bushes. I'll hold Baby Nell fast all the time we're near the brook!"

They all spoke at once, clustering round Nansie, who answered them not so much by words as by smiles and indistinct murmurs. The babies always understood Nansie and were good with her. It was the grown folk who shook their heads and said she would never be anything but a poor innocent, or pointed meaningly to their foreheads when anyone asked questions about the silent, pale little lass.

She had been a docile, sweet-tempered child, never rude or violent, terrified by other children, and never able to understand or take part in either lessons or games. She would sit alone contentedly in the sunshine talking in her own language to the birds and flowers, and singing to herself while her quick fingers plaited endless lengths of straw-plait—the staple industry of the village—for her mother. Now

and then she would have strange fits of restlessness, roving away for the whole day, coming home at night weary, foot-sore, and hungry. It was impossible either to follow or to restrain her. Nor did she ever come to harm, till one stormy day when young Philip Reynholt, riding home across the downs, found the child miles away from the village, huddled up insensible under a furze bush. He thought at first she had been struck by lightning, but she was only panic-smitten, and he was able to carry her home before him on his horse.

The fright and exposure brought on an illness, after which those about her noticed a change in Nansie. She grew more awake to things around her; she recognised people; she remembered what was told her; but above all she became possessed of a spirit of dog-like attachment to Philip Reynholt. It was not shown obtrusively; in fact, he was never aware of it. She would wait for hours in the lanes round the Manor House to see him go out or in, insisted on being taken to church with her mother, so that she could watch him in his place beside his old father in the Manor House pew; and treasured up a glove that he had dropped one day, putting it under her pillow every night. Philip came to inquire after her during her illness, and when her mother complained of her trick of roaming, spoke sternly to her and forbade her to do so more. She trembled, but looked him steadily in the face, promised, and kept her word

But a great change was coming for Nansie. The old Vicar died, and the new one came. He was a devoted parish priest, which did not concern Nansie; he was a musical genius, which did.

Sitting on his low vicarage wall one day, thinking with downcast brow of the three plain, voiceless, tuneless daughters with which it had pleased Providence to afflict him, he was aware of a party of children in the field beyond practising the Harvest Thanksgiving hymns. Suddenly a voice joined in which made him start and listen, and smite his hands together with a mighty ejaculation, and then run to his garden-gate to see from what nightingale's throat came such wondrous music.

And behold it was Nansie. Oft to her parents he set in hot haste. Did they guess what a treasure they had in their keeping —this marvellous song-bird, every note of whose voice in the days to come should be worth golden guineas? She must be doubly watched and cherished. The organist must train her voice under his—the Vicar's—anxious superintendence.

The parents, simple village folk, took it all calmly. They could not love her more than they did, their only one. They had always given her of their best. They were much obliged to the Vicar, and that was all.

Down came a celebrated London physician at the Vicar's instance, who examined the child, questioned her parents, spoke oracular words of encouragement, and departed, leaving instructions for the training of her deft fingers, and for the lessons and exercises to be

used to develop her dormant faculties. They gave her the infants' class in the village school to mind. She "had a way with the children." Then she led the little wavering band of feeble trebles in the church choir. People were beginning to forget that they had once called her "poor Nansie," and spoke with respect of the wonderful art embroideries that she was working with the young ladies at the vicarage.

Such was Nansie's history up to the day when she sat at the foot of the beech-tree and sang to the sky-lark. A slim young lass of sixteen, with dainty "lady ways," on which her mother secretly prided herself; and few remaining traces of her former state beyond a certain slowness of speech and thought with all but the children, and an abstracted look in the pretty blue eyes, as if they dwelt on something past the ken of ordinary beings; and a way of holding herself aloof, that was, after all, but a pretty trick of maidenly reserve.

She had finished her posies long before the children returned, and began to pick the leaves and grasses about her, examining and comparing them, and giving them names out of her own fancy when her knowledge failed.

She plucked at a trail of ground-ivy that had begun to put forth its fresh green. It came up in a beautiful branching spray, uncovering a small arched opening under a root of the tree, and as she broke it off something jerked up into the sunshine, bright and shining, and fell into the heart of a primrose cluster. She put aside the green leaves and faint yellow buds, and there it lay—a massive gold ring with a shield-shaped green stone.

She knew it directly. Those were the Reynholt arms engraved on the stone. She had seen it on Philip's finger many a time. She held it smiling to herself, then drew a ribbon from her neck and slipped the ring on beside a medal that someone had given her. Then she lined the great brown basket with soft, green, feathery moss and filled it with her posies, wreathing the edge with ivy-sprays.

In picking them she uncovered the hole in the tree yet more, and peering in, saw something white lying on the moss. "He must have put it there. The ring must have dropped as he drew his hand back. What is it? Who is it for? It is a letter? No! There is no writing outside, though it is sealed. I may look at it."

She opened it confidently. She knew how a letter should begin and end, but this did neither, she thought. It was not signed, and began without preliminary.

"Let this be our farewell, Mona. These are the last words I shall speak to you as your lover—even Sir Francis may pardon them. I will never, of my own free will, look on your fair false face again. I try to put from my thoughts the touch of your white hand, the sound of your sweet voice. What are they now to me? They belong to Sir Francis March.

"You tell me he is devoured by pride and jealous mistrust. He is the husband you have chosen. You say you have no friend left but me. Friend! I am no friend of yours. I am your lover or nothing.

"So, of your pity, I beseech you to leave us. Had I my freedom, I would gladly put the wide world's space between us, but you know I am bound, tied hand and foot by my duty to my father, while you stay here against your husband's wish, just of your own choice.

"Therefore, Go! Though it breaks my heart to say so—my love, my queen.

"For me all is lost, *fors l'honneur!*"

Nansie put it down and looked about bewildered. She had spelled so far painfully and carefully without much sense of the words reaching her. It did not much matter that she left the rest unread. It was a very boyish effusion to the last, exaggerated in its phrasing but honest in its exaggeration. And Philip was the writer. That dawned on her at last. Then she crushed it vehemently in her hands and dropped her head forward on her knees, struggling with an actual physical spasm of pain that pierced her through and through.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo!" sang the bird overhead, and "Cuckoo, cuckoo! bring us good luck," sang the children in answer.

Nansie picked up her hat and russet cloak and went to meet them, carrying the basket. The boys had fine store of "palms" to bear in church to-morrow, the girls scampered on ahead to unlock the gate to the road. Nansie overtook them just as a carriage with a handsome pair of ponies drew up with a cloud of dust.

"Bring those primroses to me, and let me see them," cried the lady who was driving.

Nansie's face grew set and dour, and she advanced unwillingly.

Yet to anyone but Nansie the lady would have been fair to look upon. A brilliant dark beauty with a rich bloom on her cheek, soft dark eyes under heavy lashes, and red, smiling lips.

"I will buy them. Here, put them in the carriage."

"No. You cannot have them. They are for the church," said Nansie with scant civility.

"Nonsense! You can get plenty more; here's half-a-crown."

"No. I will not give them to you." She turned away abruptly, drawing away Baby Nell, whom the lady had bent forward to notice. She was a hot-tempered lady, unused to opposition.

"Simpleton!" she said angrily, her black brows frowning. "Oh, I forgot. The village idiot. You ought to be shut up. Out of the way, children!" and she made her ponies start and dash forward with the sharp cut she gave them.

"Doesn't oo like that pretty lady?" demanded Baby Nell.

"She is Lady March; I hate her," Nansie answered to herself. Then they crossed the road and climbed the stile into the field-path to the parish church.

They were received with subdued acclamation in the porch.

Easter was early this year and spring was late, and till now primroses had seemed unattainable. Some dozen workers were doing their best with scant materials, assisted by the Vicar and Curate, and some workmen who had dropped in at their dinner-hour. Nansie's posies must go to the east window, they all agreed, and she carried them up to the workers in the chancel.

"Where did you find so many?" someone asked.

"In Redwoods, down by the stream," she replied.

"Redwoods! They are not open!" spoke Philip Reynholt sharply, looking round from the pillar to which he was fastening a garland. He was a handsome, bright-faced young fellow, with kindly blue eyes and a yellow moustache. He looked disturbed, and spoke louder than he intended.

"The General let us in himself when he heard we were gathering for the church."

"Oh, if my father allowed it, all right."

"Hush, if you please," said the Vicar. "Send the little ones home, Nansie, and as I think most of our choir are here, we can go over the hymns for to-morrow."

Baby Nell and her brother pattered hand in hand down the aisle, the Curate seated himself at the organ, and the singers took their places. Philip refused to join them, and took his place moodily on the base of a pillar out of sight. What had *he* to do with "Easter triumph, Easter joy?" He, still in the strain and stress of the conflict, fighting miserably, despairingly, conscious that whichever way the victory went it meant loss and woe unutterable to him. Nansie's voice used to charm him once with its clear, cold purity of tone, but to-day it moved and distressed him. It sounded richer, fuller, more human, with a touch of passion that stirred some answering chord within him.

He stole silently away, leaving the Easter hymn unfinished.

Nansie sat at her window late into the night watching the fleecy clouds scud before the wind across the starless sky. She had read and re-read the letter till she knew it by heart, and deeper and deeper the meaning sank into her mind. Then she stole softly downstairs into the living room, where the embers on the hearth still glowed, and kindling them with her breath into a flame, burned the letter to ashes. A spirit of unrest had seized the girl; she felt it driving her forth as in her childish days. The trees seemed to beckon and the voice of the wind to call. She wrapped herself in hood and cloak, and opening the door noiselessly, sped out into the night.

Fast and far she walked, till, returning homeward, she found herself in Broadmeads, within sight of the house that Sir Francis March had taken for the winter season. *Now* she knew what she was going for, and across the park she hurried, and plunged into a woodland track

that would lead her direct to Redwoods and the primrose dell. Straight as the crow flies, through brake and briar, she made her way till she stood at the foot of the tall beech tree. In the cavity at its roots lay another letter.

A tiny, fancifully-folded, tinted and scented note. She took it with a shiver of excitement, hid it in her dress, and made for home.

It was clutched in her hand when she woke next morning after a few brief hours of sleep, and she anxiously strained her wits to decipher it. It was not possible for her to have entirely understood it, or fathomed the depths of heartless folly to which inordinate vanity can drive a woman of Lady March's type. She had jilted Philip Reynholt coolly and calculatingly for her wealthy old admirer, yet she grudged the loss of a lover. It was easy to guess what her reply to poor Phil's appeal would have been had she received it. As it was, she was evidently indignant at his not meeting her, or writing, and she wrote with just enough acerbity to pique and just enough tender sweetness to entice him into further folly. She ended by imperatively demanding that he should meet her there, at 7 o'clock on Sunday evening—and she put it so that it would have been difficult to refuse.

Nansie's eyes were angry as she hid it away before her mother came to call her.

She went through the usual routine—Sunday school—the lengthy Easter Day service—dinner—and Sunday school again, in her old mechanical fashion. Her mother had made her a white dress for the day; and as she coiled up Nansie's yellow hair and pinned a cluster of primroses at her throat, she secretly rejoiced at her daughter's fairness and the contrast she made to the bouncing, blooming village girls with their over-smart dress and hoyden manners, or the prim, dowdy young ladies from the vicarage. "She is like a lily amongst them," thought the good woman.

She did her part in the singing carefully and well, but the music sounded lifeless and tuneless to her, and Philip's ring weighed on her breast like a circlet of red-hot iron. She could see the Broadmeads pew, where Sir Francis sat huddled up in a great fur coat, his sharp, spiteful eyes ever on the watch, and Lady March, beautiful and devout, kept her long lashes bent steadfastly on her book, except for one brief expressive second when they flashed forth a signal to the seat in the chancel where Philip sat beside his old father. Nansie saw it all. She was becoming painfully alive to the hints and suggestions that were floating in the air about her. Self-consciousness was dawning in the girl. She began to wonder at herself—at this Nansie, her whole soul in a tumult of wrath and agony of suspense—and at the other Nansie who curtsied to the Vicar and stood up with the little ones to say her catechism and forgot half of it.

Would the day ever be done and the clock strike seven? She was bound to go to church, and meanwhile what might be happening?

She was in her place listening vacantly to the organist's last whispered injunctions when the first stroke of the hour sounded. Another, and the last comers of the congregation hurried in and the organist struck the first chord of the voluntary. Another, and a footfall she knew amongst a thousand caught her ear, and Philip passed her leading the old General to his place.

"Did you ever hear anything more magnificent than the hymn to-night?" asked the Vicar, excitedly, of his family. "It was simply thrilling. How the girl sings! She *must* have some glimmering of the sense of it all, poor creature."

"Perhaps she felt excited and triumphant about something on her own account," said the eldest and most matter-of-fact daughter.

"There will be a letter in the beech tree to-night," thought Nansie, and escaped to see. She was right. There it lay. A mere scrap written on a leaf of a note-book with a châtelaine pencil. A scribbled reproach, half-tender, half-imperious: She would await his explanations.

Nansie watched and waited.

No meeting took place, she was sure, during the next few days. The old General was ill, and his son never left his bedside.

Another note came to the beech tree a day or two later. "Had he waited for her in vain? Sir Francis had kept her prisoner in a fit of mad jealousy. *Why* did he not even write to her? Was he afraid of compromising her? She would risk that and more for a word of sympathy. Ever his Mona."

Nansie hid it safely with the rest.

Another followed—angry and questioning. "Was he watched as well as herself? His father, she knew, hated her, but was he a man to bear it? Why did he not defy them all, and come openly to her house? Sir Francis could not shut the door against a neighbour. She would be at home at a given hour every day for a week."

This was the last. Nansie waited for more, but none came.

Then she began to ponder about what she was to do with her plunder. She had some dim floating notions about the rights of ownership. Had they been addressed to Philip she would have given them to him at once, but they were not; they did not even commence with his name. Then they must belong to "Mona." Well, she should have them—"some day." Nansie would keep them safe for her. She had a desk, a school-prize for needlework, with a plentiful supply of unused stationery. She took a sheet of paper and enclosed the letters, and then with much solemnity lit a candle and sealed the parcel with Philip's ring. "I will carry this always with me till I meet her, and then I will throw it at her feet and tell her he has never read a line of them." A silly fancy, but it pleased her.

"They say the poor old Squire's going fast," her father said at dinner a day or two later. "I met Mr. Philip fetching the London doctor from the station. Eh, but he looks bad. Ten years older with trouble."

"Ah, well. It's what we must all come to," said the good dame, cheerfully, beginning to clear the table.

Neither of them thought of Nansie. She had never appeared to listen to what passed before her unless directly addressed, and not always to understand then. Now, though she sat with eyes cast down, her ears were alert to catch every word, and the whole strength of her mind bent upon understanding it. She slipped away to think. From her window she could see the Manor House, where the Squire lay dying and Philip watched in lonely sadness. An irresistible impulse seemed to draw her there. She looked at her pretty white gown hanging on its peg, but some delicate instinct made her keep to the faded old frock and russet cloak, childishly short and scant as they were.

Her old wanderings had taught her every path and short cut to the Manor. She had haunted the place at all times and seasons too often not to know exactly how near she could approach unseen almost to the very windows. Then a sudden dash across the open and she was safe in the shelter of the portico.

She tried the door softly. It was on the latch, and, opening it, she slid into the hall like a shadow. Plenty of hiding-places there. A high-backed carved settle stood on one side the hearth, and behind this she could kneel, watching her chance to see or hear of Philip.

Suddenly the door-bell clanged loudly and impatiently. She heard the servant's footsteps crossing the hall, and then a voice that she knew.

"I wish to see Mr. Reynholt at once."

"Beg your pardon, my lady, but Mr. Reynholt is with the General, and the doctor's orders are that they are not to be disturbed."

"Then I shall come in and wait till you can take my message."

The man made a feeble murmured protest, but unavailingly, and Lady March swept past him regardless. "Tell him I am here. Tell him to come as soon as he can. I will wait till I see or hear from him."

"The doctor's orders—" again protested the butler.

"I shall not go without an answer to my message." Lady March's voice was raised high with impatience, and the man made the best of the situation by showing her hurriedly into the library and shutting the door on her.

Nansie heard the rustle of a dress on the staircase and the voice of a housekeeper or nurse speaking low but imperatively.

"What's the meaning of this disturbance? Have you forgotten your orders, Parkins?"

"I couldn't help it, Mrs. Peterson. It's Lady March—won't go without seeing Mr. Reynholt. It's on important business."

"Nothing is of such importance as peace and quietness just now. You may tell her that. The doctor says nobody is to go near the room. Everything depends on this sleep lasting."

"It won't be the slightest good telling her so," predicted the butler despondently.

"Then say you have given the message to *me*. *I* shall know how to dispose of her." Mrs. Peterson marched determinedly away. The butler looked doubtfully at the library door, and finally departed to his own quarters, letting events slide.

Nansie listened and thought awhile. "She must go," she decided. "If he daren't tell her so, I will. She shan't stay here." Then she boldly crossed the hall and flung the door open.

Lady March sat at the writing-table, her chin resting on her clasped hands. She looked handsomer than ever, Nansie thought, her cheeks were so red and her eyes shone so. When she beheld Nansie, they opened wider than ever with anger and contempt.

"What are you doing here? Who gave you leave to come and prowl about the house?" she asked wrathfully.

Nansie advanced quite steadily. "I have come on an errand. The man dared not tell you. You are to go."

"What!" She sprang to her feet, her brow thunder, her eyes lightning. "*What* do you say?"

"You are to go," repeated Nansie still more emphatically. "Mr. Reynholt wants you to go."

"He dares send me such a message—and by you—the idiot. And you dared to repeat it!"

With a sweeping rush she was on Nansie, and had seized her by the shoulder fiercely, her wrathful eyes flashing, her cheek crimson, her voice choking with rage. Nansie shook like a reed in her furious grasp, and her face blanched with terror, but a wild, savage sense of power rose in her heart. She—*She*, "Poor Nansie," could make this great lady mad with rage! She could never sneer at her for a "harmless idiot" again. They were enemies, and so equals.

"Let me alone; I have something for you," she managed to gasp.

The grasp on her shoulder was loosened, and Lady March almost flung her from her.

"Give it me quickly, you fool."

Nansie brought forth her packet. It was snatched out of her hand. Lady March's eyes grew suddenly soft, and a complacent smile dawned on her lips. She examined the seal. "If you had dared to break it," she muttered, threateningly. Then turning her back contemptuously on the girl, she broke open the packet. Her own letters fell to the ground at her feet.

Nansie caught the reflection of her face in the mirror above, and before she could turn, had opened the door and fled softly away.

Next week Sir Francis and Lady March left Broadmeads for the Continent.

It all happened long ago. Who can tell where a story really ends? To my mind it seems to go on for ever. Nansie laughs and says

hers is only just beginning. She is a beautiful woman now, with a lovely voice, and a name well-known all round the world. She has had a brilliant career, with enough incident in it to set up a score of romance writers in trade, and has refused foreign coronets of all sorts and sizes, native money-bags, a prosperous impressario, and a millionaire from across the water. And yet she was pleased to tell me that she considers her life a blank up to a given date last year, when a certain handsome young artist asked permission to paint her portrait.

She is as good as she is gifted, and he is worthy of her. May they be happy. But how about Philip Reynholt?

"Oh," says Nansie, "I saw him last night at the State Concert, with his beautiful American bride. Till she appeared, Lady March had been the handsomest woman in the room. Was it not strange they did not appear to know one another? And"—with a wistful look and a smile that was half a sigh—"neither had the slightest recollection of me."

"So much the better for everyone," said I.

SNOW IN APRIL.

O FOOLISH bud, to blow
  At first faint smile of Spring,
Perfuming all the air!
  O foolish bird, to sing,
And build a nest that all may spy;
  Your young of cold and want will die
Beneath the branches bare.

How sad and silent now
  The tuneful April grove!
Its colour, melody and love
  All lost beneath the snow;
The fair and flowery April grove,
  With all its birds in pair.

O foolish heart, beware!
  Nor, unforeseeing,
(Lured by a yearned-for bliss—
  A smile, a kiss),
Barter sweet hopes of youth and youth's well-being,
  To build and blossom in a leafless bower,
  With April bird and flower,
Lest Love take wing amid the falling snows—
Oh, wait for summer shade and perfumed rose!

C. M. GEMMER.

MEE
R TAYLOR

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1890.

THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XI.

A WEDDING.

AGAIN a few years went on at Seaford—such a few!—and Mrs. Halliwell found she was not likely to make an old woman. The time was coming that she must die. She thought it was not quite so near: her daughters that it was not near at all. She kept up very well, and they saw no danger.

One evening she was sitting on the sofa, with her feet up, near the open window, for she loved the air of the early summer; Hester and Mary were working, and Lucy reading aloud, when Mrs. Halliwell signed to the latter to cease. "Someone is coming towards our house," she said, "like a traveller; for surely that is a truck of luggage following."

"A lady in deep mourning," added Mary, looking up. "Yes, she is making direct for our house. Who can it be?"

"Mamma," cried Hester, hastily, "be prepared. I fear—you will not be alarmed."

"Hester, you know that I suffer nothing to alarm me. Speak out."

"I fear it is Aunt Copp; in widow's weeds."

Aunt Copp it proved to be. She came in, leaving Phœby to take care of the luggage, and sat down amidst them without a word. Throwing back her crape veil, she pointed with her two hands towards her full muslin cap and burst into tears.

"Dear Aunt Copp," cried Lucy, crying too, as she took her hands, "we see it all. When did it happen?"

"I don't know that I can tell you," she answered after relieving herself by copious sobs. "And to think that Sam never saw his poor dear father before he went! He's second mate now."

"When did it happen?" they inquired. "When we last heard, you were at Calcutta."

"Mind you, I knew the voyage would prove unlucky," said Aunt Copp, who went from one piece of news to another, in spite of her grief, and was certainly not one to bury it in silence; "for the very night after we started for home, a nasty great hulky-bulky ship came along, without lights, and stove in our bulwarks, took off the bowsprit, and ripped up the boats, and we had to put back to Sauger Roads for repair. But I said to the Captain, 'You'll see: this turn will be a bad one.' And sure enough it was. Ah, me!"

"Do not tell us about it just yet, if it pains you, Aunt Copp," said Mary.

"Oh, I'll tell you. It—is that Mary?" she demanded, taking the first good look at her. "I can tell you all what—she's the flower of the flock. I never saw so pretty a girl."

Mary was very pretty, with her dark silky hair, her rich blue eyes, and her delicate face, that was, just now, blushing crimson.

"A graceful, elegant girl as ever I saw," continued Aunt Copp. "You must be nineteen, now."

"Just nineteen," murmured Mary, who was blushing still. "But will you not tell us, Aunt Copp—if not too painful?"

"There's not much to tell, my dear. Only that the voyage was disastrous from beginning to end. A fever broke out after our second starting; the chief mate and some of the crew died, rendering us short of hands. Then we had dreadful weather, nothing but storms and hurricanes; and my poor husband was completely worn out with fatigue, which may have rendered him more likely to take illness. We touched at the Cape; a fever was raging there; not the same sort which had attacked the ship: my husband had escaped the first, but this he caught. When we sailed away from the Cape he was sickening for it, and in a week's time, girls—oh, it's a mournful thing to tell you!—his poor dear body was sewn up, and, at sundown, plunged into the sea. I hope it escaped those horrid sharks; but"—lowering her voice to a whisper—"one was following the vessel."

"Aunt Copp," shuddered Mary, "why could you not have brought it home to be buried on land? He could have lain by poor papa."

"Bless your ignorant heart, child, we can't keep the dead aboard ship. The sailors would jump into the sea first, and swim away, on the chance of being picked up. Our second mate—a very nice young fellow, who had acted as first since the chief mate went off—read the service over his poor body, so it's a consolation to think he had Christian burial. And he was a good man," earnestly added Aunt Copp, "for he never ill-treated one of his sailors in his life, so I am not afraid but what he is happy."

"When did you land?" asked Mrs. Halliwell.

"Only just. Our second mate brought the ship home *well;* my poor old Captain could not have done it better. It's a great feather in his cap, and I have not forgotten to mention it in his certificate.

I have a world of business before me. So as soon as I landed, after rigging myself in my new costume, which I feel most wretched in, and can't bear the sight of, I came right off to London to do it, taking you on the road, for a day or two, before I get there."

"I thought you were come for a long stay, Aunt Copp. There seemed a great deal of luggage."

"I never travel without plenty of luggage; there's no knowing what one may want. Some of it is for you. Dresses, and shawls, and I don't know what all, from Jane Pepper."

"Tell me about her," sighed Mrs. Halliwell.

"Well, I don't want to shock you, but unless Jane chooses to take heart, she'll just cry herself to death."

"Cry herself to death!" uttered Mrs. Halliwell.

"She cries morning, noon, and night. At least she did for the last fortnight of my stay there. All the children are gone."

"*All!*"

"All three; they have followed the other two. Little sickly things they were. The one died before I got to Calcutta, and the two others while I was there. So that makes all five gone. Of course Jane frets herself into shreds over it, and to reason with her was useless. 'Five such darling children,' she kept harping upon, 'and all gone.' 'Your crying won't mend it, Jane,' I said, and with that she set on and cried the more. So I went to her husband. 'Captain Pepper,' I said (by the way, he's getting on rapidly, and expects soon to have his majority), 'do you want to bury Jane?'

"'To bury her!' he echoed, staring at me, 'what do you mean, Aunt Copp?'—for, you see, that's what he has taken to call me, through hearing Jane.

"'Why, she'll just fret and stew herself into her grave at the rate she is going on,' I answered. 'Now you had better persuade her to come with us to England. I and Captain Copp will take good care of her on the voyage' (little thinking, you know, my dears, what a one we were going to have), 'and it will be change of scene and change of air. She'll stop with her mother and sisters, and when she's tired of them, and her health is strong, she can come back to you. Now, Captain, you must just worry her till she consents, for it's the only thing.'

"'I'll try and persuade her, Aunt Copp,' said he. 'I think a voyage to England would do her good, and I have told her so.' Well, my dears, he could do nothing with her, any more than I could. Jane would not leave him: and my belief is, that though he talked to her before me, he just stopped when my back was turned. They are as fond of each other, are those two, as they were the day they married, which, as I represented to them, was perfectly unreasonable and ridiculous. However, the upshot was, that Jane let us sail without her, and I don't believe you'll get her over to Europe at all, unless he can obtain leave and come with her. So there."

"How is she looking, Rebecca?" asked Mrs. Halliwell.

"As thin as a herring. And she has lost one of her front teeth, and her face is drawn and yellow. She looks ten years older than Hester."

"Oh, Aunt Copp!" exclaimed Hester.

"She does. I don't think the climate agrees with her. And then her children have come so quickly."

"And gone again," sighed Mrs. Halliwell.

"Oh, well," said Aunt Copp, "if she could only get over the grief, the poor little things are better off."

"How is Sam?"

"I suppose he's all right: I had a letter from him when I landed at Liverpool, which was waiting there. He has gone to the Bermudas."

"I hope you are left comfortably off, Rebecca," said Mrs. Halliwell.

"Middling. It might be better and it might be worse. When things are squared up, I shall have about what the East India Company allow you—£200 a year, which, of course, will be Sam's after me. Sam has some in a lump, which I daresay he'll make ducks and drakes of, as soon as he touches it. Do you know," added Aunt Copp, peering at her sister-in-law, "you are not looking well? Very ill, *I* think."

"I cannot boast much, Rebecca."

"And now, girls, guess where I went as I came up from Liverpool. I took somebody in my way."

"The Halliwells at Middlebury, perhaps."

"No. Alfred. I wanted to see an old shipmate of the poor Captain's, who lives within a few miles of Chelson, so I thought I might as well go on, and have a look at them."

"Are they quite well?"

"Nothing to boast of. Alfred has a deal to do, and is badly paid, and his wife has scarcely got over her last illness. At the pace they are going, they will have a score or two of children, I should say. Worse than Jane."

"How do you like her, Rebecca?"

"Pretty well. She does not seem to be a first-rate manager, and there's no regularity in the house, but then there's only one servant for everything, children and baby and all. I should think the confusion must drive the parson wild at sermon writing time. Mabel had a sister stopping with her for a day or two."

"Which one?" asked Hester. "Matilda or Fanny?"

"Neither. They called her Amy. A meek-tempered, soft-headed girl as ever I saw; nothing to say for herself."

"Then she is not like Hester's description of Matilda and Fanny," laughed Lucy.

"I say, Hester," resumed Aunt Copp, going to another theme, "have you heard anything of that booby yet?"

"What booby?" exclaimed Hester.

"Your parson."

A deep flush rose to Hester's face. "No," she whispered. "Nothing."

"I hope you never will, for he was not worth it. And some of you ridiculed my cards!"

"Aunt Copp," broke in Mary, "have you told anyone's fortune lately?"

"Child," said Aunt Copp, solemnly, "I have never told one since. I never will again."

"Since when?"

"That time. Before your papa died."

Somehow, that night, Hester could not sleep. Since Mrs. Halliwell grew worse, she had occupied a small bed in her room, and she slipped quietly out of it, and throwing on a dressing-gown, went into the corridor. It was a lovely night. The moon, nearly at the full, was riding, clear and bright, in the dark blue sky, and Hester stood at the window, looking out. She was thinking over many things: the passage of life seemed dark for their family just then. Her mother's decay, her sister Jane's sorrow, her brother's struggles, Captain Copp's death, and—it *would* mix with the rest—doubts of the fate of George Archer. Hester's tears came, and flowed silently. "But—God is over all," she murmured, looking up at the fair expanse of sky; "as He permits it, it *must* be right." Suddenly she started and listened: was that her mother calling to her in a faint voice? Hester glided silently in again: she was not sure.

"Hester—Hester—child—where—are—you?"

"Dearest mamma, what is the matter? You cannot breathe."

"I am worse, child;" but there was still a pause between every word. "Do not alarm the house. Call Phœby only, and let her go for Mr. Davis."

Hester did not alarm the house, but she woke them quietly. Phœby was despatched for Mr. Davis.

It was early morning when he came, and in the evening of that same day, Mrs. Halliwell died.

"What a mercy that I was here!" ejaculated Aunt Copp. "My poor girls, I'll stop with you till after the funeral, and then be off to London, get over my business, and come back to you."

"Do not put yourself out of the way to return to us, Aunt Copp," said Hester, for she had a dim idea that they should manage better without her than with her; but her sorrow was too great just then to dwell upon trifles.

Alfred came to the funeral, and Mr. Halliwell of Middlebury. The mournful duties were gone through, and the business duties. It had been Mrs. Halliwell's wish that her daughters should remain in the house for a year after her death, for which she had provided.

They would each then have £500, and alas! must look out for themselves, and do the best they could in life.

Aunt Copp was as good as her word, and she returned to them on the conclusion of her business in town, and a regular worry she proved to be. Desperately bustling and active, she interfered in everything. Not a bit of crape could they begin to hem, but Aunt Copp would clap on her tortoiseshell spectacles, go peering at it, and find some fault. It was not cut straight, or it was begun at the wrong end, or the hem was not broad enough, and she would whisk it out of their hands, draw out the stitches at one pull, and make them begin it according to her own notions. Not a thing could Hester steal into the kitchen to do, leaving her safe, as she hoped, with Lucy and Mary, but in five minutes she had ferreted her out. Hester was putting too much stuffing in the duck, and Phœby had overboiled the onions; or—*that* was not enough jam for the roly-pudding; and she'd have no salt put in the crust; she hated salt. This was enough to provoke Hester, who was a most efficient seamstress and housewife, but she had a calm, patient temper, and bore with it. Phœby put up with it less equably: Aunt Copp was the worry of her life; and she went one day to Hester's bedroom in desperation to say that if Mrs. Copp stayed, she should go.

Three months of it they had, and then Aunt Copp departed. Mary had been invited to visit Mr. and Mrs. Halliwell at Middlebury, so her aunt undertook to convey her there, on her way to Liverpool, where she intended to establish her home.

Mary Halliwell's stay at Middlebury lengthened into winter, and then she wrote to say they must not expect her till spring. However, a few days after the receipt of this letter by Hester, they were surprised by her arrival with Mr. Halliwell.

"Do you know why I have brought her to Seaford?" asked the latter.

"Because you were tired of her," said Hester; "which I thought you must have been, weeks ago."

"Not exactly that. Miss Mary has been engaging herself to take somebody else's name."

Hester and Lucy were too surprised to speak. Mary stood with her eyes cast down and her cheeks crimson.

"And as I look upon you, Hester, somewhat in the light of a guardian to her," proceeded Mr. Halliwell, "I thought it my duty to come and lay the case before you, ere it went any further. Mary—where's she gone?"

Mary had escaped from the room. Hester sat down with a sigh. "There seems nothing but trouble," she breathed. "Is it a very unsuitable engagement?"

"Pray, my dear, who said it was unsuitable at all?" smiled Mr. Halliwell.

Hester considered. "I believe I inferred so from your manner—and Mary's."

"She is gone, so I'll speak out, but I don't foster her vanity by saying it before her. He is one of the nicest young fellows that ever lived; and she could not have chosen better, if she had had the pick of all Middlebury."

"How you have relieved me," exclaimed Hester. "Who is it?"

"Dr. Goring."

"A physician?"

"No, my dear," laughed Mr. Halliwell; "he is only a general practitioner, but we call them all doctors down with us. If I had a daughter, I don't know anyone I would sooner give her to than to young Goring. And I prove myself particularly disinterested in saying this, for someone else wanted Mary."

"Who?" questioned Hester.

"My son, poor Tom. She has given his heart a twinge; not purposely, for I never saw a girl with less coquetry in my life. She is an admirable girl, Hester."

"I trust she is," answered Hester, with pride.

"Tom soon found he should have no chance, so he drew in and set-to to cure himself of his love fever. And as he went off it, Goring went into it. She did not look with a cool eye on *him*. He is a most attractive man, as you will soon see. He is here."

"Here!"

"He travelled with us, and is stopping at the Seaford Arms. I came on to make all straight for him, and he was to follow."

"Oh, dear!" cried Hester.

"You need not say 'oh, dear'," laughed Mr. Halliwell. "He has nothing formidable about him: the pleasantest young man you ever spoke to."

"Has he a good income?" inquired Hester.

"A very good one. He has succeeded to an excellent practice in Middlebury. Take it altogether, Hester, it is a very desirable match for Mary. If—there he is." Hester looked from the window, and saw someone very good-looking coming down the opposite road.

Phœby opened the door, and Dr. Goring (we may as well call him so as the Middlebury people) entered. A tall, slender, gentlemanly young man, with a sunny countenance and a remarkably pleasant voice and manner. Hester did not wonder at Mary's having fallen in love with him; she was ready to do so herself. He wanted the marriage to take place without delay.

"That cannot be," said Hester. "Her mother has only been dead six months."

"But just consider," argued Dr. Goring, laughing and looking as if he did not believe that to be an insuperable bar. "Some of my patients object to me because I am a bachelor. I assure you, Miss Halliwell, it is essential to my professional interests that I marry."

"We so loved our dear mother: all Seaford so respected her. No, Dr. Goring; decidedly no. The very day after the first year's

mourning shall be up, then you may have Mary. I scarcely think she would herself wish it to take place earlier."

"But I do," he said.

"Do not urge it, Dr. Goring. Indeed, I cannot consent. I feel that it would not be right; not seemly."

So Dr. Goring and Mr. Halliwell went back to Middlebury, and the wedding was fixed to take place in June. Mary, of course, remained at home, busy enough with her preparations. Dr. Goring paid them a flying visit now and then, and the period drew near.

What was their astonishment, a few days previous to it, to see Aunt Copp arrive! Hester had incautiously written her word of the progress of affairs, and instead of receiving an answer, wishing Mary good luck, or something of that sort, who should come but Aunt Copp herself, by the morning mail, to be followed, in the course of the day, by a sea-chest, two hair trunks, and two bandboxes, the mail having refused to carry them. Hester and Lucy were petrified.

"Now, what do you three girls think of yourselves?" she began. "Did you ever hear of a young girl being married from a house without a matron in it to countenance her?"

The idea had really not occurred to Hester. Steady and sedate, and turned thirty years, she believed herself a proper guide and protector to Mary, and ventured to hint as much to her aunt.

"Quite false ideas," called out Aunt Copp. "Never was such a thing heard of, I tell you, as a young lass going out of a house where there was no married woman in it. For my part, I question if such a wedding would stand good. Why, you would have been the talk for miles round. And Mary is such a child."

"I am twenty, Aunt Copp," interrupted Mary.

"Twenty!" scornfully ejaculated Aunt Copp. "So was I twenty, when I married my poor dead-and-gone sailor husband, and a precious goose he found me. I was one-and-twenty when my darling boy was born (I had a letter from him last week, girls, and he's made first mate now, through the other one going off with yellow fever; and was beating about in a calm in the Pacific, which gave him time to write), and a precious goose of a mother *he* found me, the innocent baby! So don't boast to me of your twenty years; go and tell it to the marines. What should three girls know about the management necessary at a wedding? Have you thought to order the cake?"

"Oh, yes, we have done that."

"And to get cards printed?"

"And that also."

"And the style of setting out the breakfast? Have you discussed that?"

"Not yet."

"I thought so," groaned Aunt Copp. "No ship-shape arrangements beforehand, no consultations, no nothing. A pretty muddle you'll be in when the morning comes! be leaving the dressing of the

table to Phœby, or some such carelessness. She'll put the fowls at the side, and the custards round with the glasses, for of all incapable headpieces, that woman's is the worst. Oh! if the poor Major could only look up from his grave and witness this state of things! or your dear mamma! Of course you'll have custards?"

"If you think it necessary, Aunt Copp," said Hester; "but we do not wish any needless show or expense. Besides the clergyman and his wife, and two or three more friends, there will only be ourselves and Alfred."

"Why, you have never gone and sent for Alfred!" snapped Aunt Copp. It was not that she was really ill-tempered, but her way of snapping people up had grown upon her worse than ever.

"Alfred is to marry me, Aunt Copp," said Mary.

"Lord help ye for three thoughtless simpletons—and him for another! A poor fellow, whose living is only a hundred and seventy-five pounds a year, fees included, and whose outgoings take it half off pretty near, before he can say a shilling of it is his own, and his wife sick, and his children coming on as thick as blackberries, to be dragged across the country, a hundred miles, to marry a child! It will be four pounds out of his pocket."

"It will not be out of *his* pocket, Aunt Copp," interrupted Lucy in a nettled tone; "we have taken care of that." But Aunt Copp only groaned for answer: she never would allow that they did anything right.

"And pray, Miss Lucy, is there anything of the sort agate for you?" she went on.

"Why, Aunt Copp!" ejaculated Lucy, laughing and blushing. "Of course not."

"I don't see any 'of course' in the matter. If Hester is fated to live and die an old maid, that's no reason why you should. I advise you to set about looking out for a suitable husband. If you have not Mary's beauty, you are a likely-looking, lady-like girl, and you'll never see seven-and-twenty again. Keep your weather eye open, and —dear me! the very thing!"

This concluding exclamation, in a changed tone of voice, as if Aunt Copp had just recollected something, caused them to look at her.

"I wish to goodness I knew where he was bound to! But, you see, when I got out, he went on in the mail."

"What is it you are talking of, Aunt Copp?"

"Such a charming gentleman! He was my fellow-passenger. Where he came from, I cannot tell you, for he was in the mail when I got in. I should think, by his conversation, he was a Londoner, and had been down to our part of the country. A fine man as you'd wish to see, six foot high, with a full blue eye, and a colour like a red cabbage. He told me he was looking out for a wife, and had come out, travelling, to find one, and meant to marry as soon as he

had found her. It would be the very thing for Lucy! I declare, if he were within reasonable distance, I'd send my card, and ask him to tea. I know I should get him for you, Lucy."

"Really, Aunt Copp, you are growing old and ridiculous," responded Lucy, uncertain whether to laugh or be angry.

"Old, am I! ridiculous, am I!" bridled Aunt Copp, in a fury; "everybody doesn't think so. Why, he wanted to try it on with me, I could see he did, a handsome man like him, and not a day more than five or six-and-thirty. He did, Miss Lucy, and you need not begin grinning there. We had the mail to ourselves, or as good, for the fat farmer who took up the opposite seat nearly from side to side was snoring all night. Very polite indeed he was, and very respectful, quite the gentleman in his manners, and would keep on kissing my hand. But I volunteered to tell him I had been married once, which I had found quite enough, and I did not purpose taking another, preferring to remain my own mistress, besides having a dear son, who was chief officer of a splendid two-decker, now becalmed in the Pacific (unless the wind should have got up since), and that I had no love to spare from my boy for the best second husband that could offer. Whereupon my gentleman turned sulky and gathered himself up in his corner. Old, am I? Forty-five's old, is it? Just put that window up, Mary. I'm hot."

So they had to endure Aunt Copp's company, and make the best of it. But even before Mary's wedding morning arrived, and her handsome young husband came and took her away, she had tried their patience severely.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN KERLETON.

VERY dull they felt the day after the wedding, Friday. Aunt Copp was setting things to rights in the house and worrying Phœby in the kitchen, while Hester and Lucy seemed scarcely to know what to do with themselves. Their brother had left them early in the morning, wishing to get home before Saturday. After dinner, Lucy proposed a walk, and Aunt Copp acquiesced.

"Let us go and look at the haymaking," she said. "The smell of it, coming in here at the windows, puts me in mind of my young days, when I tumbled over the haycocks with the best of them."

Accordingly, they went into the hayfield, one rented by Mr. Williams, the Rector. He was there with his wife and little boys, at work in his shirt-sleeves. "That's right, young ladies," he called out, when he saw them, "come and scatter the hay about: the more it's open to the sun, the better, this hot afternoon. A pleasant, rural scene this, ma'am"—to Aunt Copp.

"Yes, sir. I was telling the girls that the smell made me believe

myself young again. I have not been in the way of it much, Mr. Williams, since I settled in life; what with living in seaport towns, where one's nose meets with nothing but tar and pitch, and going voyages with my husband, where one scents nothing but salt brine, and never sees a field for months. There, Hester!"

Aunt Copp, with her great strong arms, had seized a whole haycock, and dashed it over Hester. That was the commencement of the sport. They laughed, and screamed, and smothered each other in hay, Mrs. Williams and Lucy being foremost in the fray.

After two hours' fun, they were leaving the field, tired, heated and thirsty, when Aunt Copp, who had rushed up to a haycock, some few of which were left intact near the entrance, intending to favour Hester and Lucy with a parting salute from behind, gave a loud scream, which caused them to look round.

Well done, Aunt Copp! Instead of securing the mound of hay, her arms had entangled themselves round the neck of a gentleman, who had stretched himself to recline on the off-side of it, and had fallen into a doze.

"Good heavens above!" ejaculated Aunt Copp. "I beg your pardon, sir. I thought I was laying hold of nothing but the haycock."

"No offence, ma'am. I wish you'd put your arms there again. Ah, my dear regretted fellow-traveller, is it you! How *do* you find yourself by this time? I have been up and down the country ever since. I forgot, you must know, the name of the place where you stopped, so I thought I'd take all the stopping places of the mail, one by one, which I did, and came here in rotation this afternoon, intending to pay my respects to you. What two delightful ladies!"

"They are my nieces," returned Aunt Copp. "Miss Halliwell and Miss Lucy Halliwell."

"And I am Captain Kerleton—if you will allow me to introduce myself—formerly serving with my regiment in India; but the duty did not agree with me, so I sold out. Would this little spot be a pleasant part of the country to stop in for a week or two, think you?"

"Very," cried Aunt Copp, impressively. "And the Seaford Arms is an excellent inn."

"Then I'm off for it. Which is the road?"

"There," she replied, pointing in the direction of the village, "about five minutes' walk. But won't you step in with us, and take a cup of tea? It will refresh you this hot afternoon. Our house is close by. Girls," she added, seizing a minute to whisper to them as they walked on, for the stranger eagerly accepted the invitation, "this is the gentleman I told you of, the one in the mail, you know, who wants a wife. So look out, Lucy."

Lucy felt annoyed, and naturally. She was a most retiring-minded girl, and had a genuine horror of thrusting herself forward to attract

the notice of gentlemen. Hester was even more displeased. She thought it exceedingly wrong of her aunt to introduce a stranger to their home in that unceremonious manner. What did she know of Captain Kerleton? He might be an adventurer, a swindler, for all she could tell to the contrary. As it afterwards turned out, he *was* a gentleman, of good family and fortune, but that was no thanks to Aunt Copp's prudence. The fact was, Mrs. Copp had been connected with seafaring people so long that she had imbibed a touch of their free-and-easy notions, and had become almost as open-hearted in her manners as her late husband, the merchant-captain.

Captain Kerleton took up his residence at the Seaford Arms, and a gay time of it ensued. The whole neighbourhood undertook to patronise him, especially the houses which contained grown-up daughters, for his fortune, really a good one, report considerably magnified. Pic-nic parties, evening parties, hay-making parties, followed close upon each other, some of which owned Aunt Copp for the projector; none remembered the quiet village ever to have been so gay. Captain Kerleton did his utmost to render himself agreeable: would run his head off to fetch and carry at any lady's whim; dance himself lame and sing himself hoarse; and when once he *was* set on to dance and sing there was no stopping him. On the whole, Hester liked his manners, and the Seaford Arms gave a pleasant account of his quiet, gentlemanly habits; but there was one trick of his which was a strange one—that of *staring*. He would sometimes be seized with one of these staring fits, and then he would sit in his chair, and look someone straight in the face for a quarter of an hour together, and never once move his eyes. Sometimes it would be Aunt Copp, sometimes Hester, sometimes Lucy, and sometimes others; it seemed to be all the same to the Captain. Once it was Phœby. He had gone into the kitchen to ask her to brush his coat, which had accidentally acquired some dust, and there he sat himself down and stared at Phœby, till the girl grew so confused that she sidled out of the kitchen and left him to it, bolting herself in the back-house.

One morning they were seated at the open window of their front parlour, busy over some shirts and bands for Alfred (whose poor wife had enough to do with her children and her household cares without thinking of new shirts and bands for the parson), and were conversing, sadly enough, of their future prospects, which were anything but distinct, when some scarlet object came looming up the opposite road. Lucy saw it first, and they all looked up through the closed Venetian blinds. The sun shone on it, hot and bright, and the scarlet was intermingled with something that glittered like gold, and dazzled the sight.

"Goodness heart alive!" uttered Aunt Copp, after a puzzled gaze through her spectacles, "if it is not Captain Kerleton in his regimentals!"

They had never seen the Captain in his regimentals, and a very imposing sight it was. He detected them at the window, and walked straight up to it.

"Good morning, ladies," he said, putting his face close to the blind. "Is not this a blazing day?"

"Something else looks blazing, I think, Captain," cried Aunt Copp. "We did not know you."

"You mean me, in my regimentals," returned the Captain; "they came down last night. I should have had them before, but the servants at home made a mistake, and sent my brother's. He is in Scotland—gone to look after his property—or it would not have happened. What are you working at so attentively, Miss Lucy?"

"I am stitching a wristband, Captain Kerleton."

"Not for me, Miss Lucy?"

"No," laughed Lucy. "For my brother."

"Perhaps the time may come, Miss Lucy, when you will stitch mine."

Aunt Copp gave a significant cough, and Lucy, after a surprised glance upwards, blushed deeply, and went on fast with her stitching.

"Will you walk in, Captain?" said Mrs. Copp. "You will find the front door open."

"Not this morning," replied the Captain. "I only came to bring this—if you'll please to open the blind."

Aunt Copp drew open the half of the Venetian blind, and the Captain thrust in a small parcel, tied up in white paper, turning short away as soon as she had it in her hands. There was no direction, and Aunt Copp held it in uncertainty.

"Captain Kerleton," she called after him, "what's this for? Is it to be opened?"

"Opened, of course," answered the Captain, whirling his head round to speak, his legs striding away all the while: "I did not bring it for anything else."

What should be in this parcel but a green-and-gold book and a small, beautifully enamelled watch, in a case. They opened the book, full of curiosity. "Advice to Young Ladies about to Enter into Housekeeping. By a Clergyman's Wife." And on the fly-leaf was written, "For the future Mrs. Kerleton, with respectful regards." On the paper enclosing the watch was written, "Miss Lucy."

"Well, if ever I saw such a start as this!" uttered Aunt Copp, while Lucy's face turned of an indignant red.

"It is shameful, Aunt Copp! It is quite indecent of you! You have been saying something to him about me. I am sure of it!"

"I declare to goodness I have not," fired Aunt Copp. "This offer of marriage—for it's nothing less—has come of his own free will, and from no talking of mine. Shan't we have a nice time of it, getting her wedding things ready, Hester?"

"Aunt Copp, I always thought you were an idiot, and now I know

it," retorted Lucy, struggling between tears and rage. "Offer of marriage, indeed! if it *is* an offer of marriage, you may take it to yourself. Hester, just pack the watch back again to the Seaford Arms; send Phœby with it. My name was not on the book, so Aunt Copp can do as she chooses with that—keep it for herself, and tell him so."

Lucy's tirade was cut short, for the blind was again pushed partly open, and a scarlet wrist went in.

"I beg your pardon," cried the Captain's voice, "I forgot this." Aunt Copp involuntarily stretched forth her hand, and received another packet, similar to the one which had contained the watch, the Captain darting off as before at the military pace of a forced march.

"Miss Lucy Halliwell," read Mrs. Copp, again, through her spectacles.

"I won't have it! call him back! throw it after him!" exclaimed Lucy. But Aunt Copp told her she knew better what she was about, and opened it.

A pretty gold chain, and the key of the watch.

"Well, my dear," said Aunt Copp, "you are in luck."

"Luck!" ironically uttered Lucy. "The man's a fool."

"I know who is a greater," rejoined Mrs. Copp, laughing at Lucy.

"Hester, I appeal to you. Is it right—is it in accordance with good manners, his poking these things in at the window? Ought they not to be sent back instantly?"

"I think it is in accordance with good-nature," Hester gently replied, "and to forward them back, as you suggest, would be returning insult for kindness. When he next calls, let Aunt Copp return him the presents, and civilly inform him that you cannot accept them."

"I wish you may get me to do it," cried Mrs. Copp. "'There is a tide in the affairs of man,' and Lucy has now got hers."

So the task fell to Hester. And when the Captain called that afternoon (still in his regimentals) Hester went to him alone. But before she had well entered upon the subject, Captain Kerleton interrupted her, and made Lucy a very handsome offer. Hester was at a nonplus: not knowing, now the affair was put upon a regular footing, whether Lucy would have him or not. She retired to the next room.

"Have him? of course," cried Aunt Copp.

"Have him? of course not," repeated Lucy.

"Niece Lucy, the matter is serious now, and you must not be childish over it. What is your objection?"

"I don't know enough of him," said Lucy. "Consider, Aunt Copp, it is only a fortnight since we first set eyes on him. The idea of promising to marry a man after a fortnight's acquaintance!"

"You need not marry him off-hand—or promise to," argued Aunt

Copp. "You call tell him you wish to see a little more of him before deciding: that will be neither accepting nor rejecting, and give you both time to improve your acquaintance with each other. *I'll* manage it."

Before they could prevent her, she dashed out of the room and joined the Captain, whom they had heard whistling as he leaned from the window. What she said to him neither Hester nor Lucy knew, but she reappeared with the Captain in her wake, and the latter fell on his regimental knees, in the most ridiculous manner, and began kissing Lucy's hand.

When they could get him off his knees and his heroics, Hester and Mrs. Copp strove to convince him how the case stood: that he was not to look upon Lucy as engaged to him, but that she was willing to meet him as an acquaintance, till they had seen more of each other. Oh, yes, yes, he agreed to everything, too glad to do it, except to taking back the presents. He grew excited when it was named, and said they would never mention it again, unless they wished to cut him to the throat. Whether he unintentionally substituted that word for heart, or whether he really contemplated making an illegitimate use of his shaving razors, in case his presents were rejected, they did not comprehend. "Never mind the presents, Lucy," cried Aunt Copp; "don't offend him: it will be time enough to send them back if you finally reject him."

So Captain Kerleton stayed on at the Seaford Arms, and Aunt Copp stayed on with her nieces, for she argued that to leave Lucy at so critical a period would not be "ship-shape." It came to be rumoured in the village that the Captain and Lucy were engaged, and some congratulated her, in spite of her denial, and some were envious. The Captain had bought favour on all sides. When anyone gave a party, there would appear dishes of the choicest fruit, the offering of the Captain, and baskets of fish were perpetually arriving everywhere with the Captain's card: he kept the younger ladies in gloves and bouquets, and once, when a concert was to be given in the village for the benefit of the poor music master, the Captain bought up all the tickets, and treated everybody. Twice he scattered silver by the handful amongst the field labourers, and the village was in an uproar for days afterwards, to the wrath of the farmers and the edification of the beershops. Nothing came amiss to the Captain's purse; whatever he saw, he bought up and distributed, from parcels of new books to litters of sucking-pigs. As to Lucy Halliwell, the things that arrived for her were just as incongruous. One morning there was a knock at the door, and upon Phœby's answering it, an air-cushion was delivered to her; an hour afterwards there was another knock, and this proved to be the milliner's girl, bearing a flaming rose-coloured bonnet and feathers. Aunt Copp thought these two articles must be meant for her, not being particularly suitable to Lucy: however, they were put by with the rest

of the things. As to remonstrating with Captain Kerleton, they had given that over as a bad job, and had no resource but to take the things in. Many of them came from London, without address to send them back to, and they did not choose to raise a scandal by despatching them to the Captain's apartments at the inn.

But things could not go on like that for ever, and Lucy felt that she must accept or reject him. The Captain felt so too, and he went up one day and told Lucy, in the presence of her sister and aunt, that he had been lying on tenter-hooks all night, and for several previous nights besides, and *would* she marry him.

"I'll make her so happy," said he, appealing to Aunt Copp, as Lucy glided from the room; "she shall have what she likes, and go where she likes. Would she like to see China?"

Mrs. Copp thought not. It was too far. She had once, herself, been in the Chinese seas, and was glad to her heart to get into British ones again.

"Oh! Because distance is no object to me," explained the Captain.

"I think, Captain Kerleton, that Lucy would wish to see a little of your family," suggested Hester.

"There's not a soul left of it but me and my brother," answered the Captain. "When he comes back from Scotland, I'll take Lucy up to see him, if she likes; which would be a good opportunity for her to get anything in London she may want for the wedding."

He evidently spoke in no bad faith; Hester saw he did not. But he did make simple remarks now and then, such as one might expect to hear from a child.

"That's not the fashion in our part of the country," said Aunt Copp, snapping him up. "Young ladies don't go on journeys with gentlemen before they are married to them."

"But that is exactly what I want," returned the Captain. "I have been ready to marry her all along. It was Miss Lucy who would not. Will she marry me to-morrow?"

"Goodness, Captain," remonstrated Aunt Copp. "With no house, and no establishment, and no anything? The neighbours would think us all out of our senses together."

"Well, the long and the short of it is this, if Miss Lucy will not have me, I shall go and find somebody else that will," cried the Captain, turning sulky—an occasional failing of his. "And I'll go by the mail to-night, if she does not give me an answer to-day."

Lucy gave him his answer, and accepted him. "But, Hester," she said to her sister, "I do it chiefly to oblige him and Aunt Copp; I don't much care for him." And Hester's opinion was that Lucy spoke the truth.

"I am not madly in love, you know," she went on, laughing, "as you were with somebody, once upon a time. I do not fancy it is in my constitution, or else our friend the Captain has failed to call it forth."

It was decided that, before fixing on any place for a residence, Captain Kerleton and Lucy should travel a little, after their marriage, taking Paris first. The Captain was perfectly agreeable to anything: would stop in the neighbourhood of Seaford, or live in London, or be a fixture in Paris, or voyage over to China. Everything that Lucy or Mrs. Copp suggested he fell in with. He seemed to think more about personal trifles. "Would you like me to go through the ceremony in my regimentals, Miss Lucy, or in plain clothes?" he inquired. "Such—let us say—as a blue coat, white waistcoat, and black—these things," slapping his knee. "What is your advice?"

It was a very home question, especially before witnesses, and Lucy blushed excessively. "Perhaps Aunt Copp can tell," she stammered.

"Oh, as to those trifles, it's not a bit of consequence," irreverently answered Aunt Copp. "When you two have once got your wedding over, you will know what nonsense it was to have made any fuss about it—as we old married stagers can tell you. Captain, of course you will have your brother down to be groomsman?"

"No, I won't," replied the Captain, bluntly. "He is the most interfering fellow going, always meddling and thwarting. You don't know the scrapes he has got me into through his interference."

"But your own brother, Captain Kerleton," urged Aunt Copp. "It would be so very unfilial."

"Shouldn't care if he was my own mother," doggedly retorted the Captain. "He is not coming down to my wedding."

But Aunt Copp was of a different opinion. And what should she do, unknown to everyone, but despatch the following note to Major Kerleton, the Captain's brother, at his town house:—

"Dear Sir,—As we are soon to be near connections, I make no apology for addressing you. Captain Kerleton being about to marry my niece, Miss Lucy Halliwell, I think it only seemly and right that you, as the Captain's elder brother and nearest relative, should be present to give your support and countenance to the ceremony. It will not take place for three weeks or a month, and we are only now beginning the preparations; but I write thus early to give an opportunity of my letter being forwarded to you in Scotland, where we hear you are staying. If you oblige me with a line in reply, stating that you accord us the favour of your company, I will write again and let you know when the day is fixed.

"Remaining, dear sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"Major Kerleton." "Rebecca Copp."

And Mrs. Copp hugged herself in secret over what she had done, and told nobody.

CHAPTER XIII.

LUCY'S ROMANCE.

MEANWHILE they began to be actively engaged, getting Lucy ready for her wedding. One morning they were in the midst of work, Miss Bowen, the dressmaker, having gone to them for the day, when they saw Captain Kerleton approaching the house. Lucy told Phœby to say they were engaged, but would see him in the afternoon. But the Captain sent word up he had something very particular to communicate to Miss Lucy; so she had to go to him.

The Captain wanted her to go for a walk, with, of course, Hester or Aunt Copp, for she was not in the habit of walking out alone with him. Which was the "particular communication" he had to make.

"It is out of my power this morning," Lucy replied. "We have some work about, which we cannot quit."

"Leave them to do it," advised the Captain; "you come for a walk. Come by yourself: never mind what that old Aunt Copp says."

"They cannot do without me," explained Lucy. "The dressmaker is cutting out my morning dresses, and I must be there that she may try them on."

"Put it off till to-morrow," urged the Captain. "Work can be done one day as well as another. See what a splendid morning it is."

"Miss Bowen will not be here to-morrow," answered Lucy. "Indeed I cannot leave them now."

"But I want you to come," persisted Captain Kerleton, somewhat after the fractious manner of a spoiled child. "You must come. You'll never go and set up your rubbish of work in opposition to my wishes, Miss Lucy?"

"Do not put it in that light," said Lucy, gently. "My dresses must be tried on, or they cannot be made; and if I went out they would all be at a standstill. I shall be most happy to go with you later in the day."

"Then you will not grant me this simple favour?"

"I cannot," returned Lucy, and away rushed the Captain, dashing to the front door, and stamping across the road.

In the evening he arrived again. They were at tea, taking it in the workroom for convenience' sake, when Phœby entered and said the Captain wanted to speak to Hester. "Not Miss Lucy," Phœby repeated, "Miss Hester." Hester went downstairs. Captain Kerleton was sitting in the easy-chair, looking red and excited.

"Do you know how she behaved to me this morning?" he began, without preface or ceremony.

"Who?" asked Hester.

"She. Miss Lucy. I asked her, as the greatest favour, to go for

a little walk with me, and she told me to my face that she would not."

"She really could not, Captain Kerleton," said Hester. "I have no doubt she would have liked to do so. You must not fancy she acted from caprice: Lucy is not capable of it."

"She told me there was some trash of sewing going on, and she had to stop in for it."

"It was the case."

"Well," returned the Captain, speaking in that dogged, obstinate manner which now and then came over him, "I look upon it in this light. When a young lady, who has promised to be your wife, makes an excuse that she can't go out with you, it is equivalent to saying she wants to break matters off. That is how I have taken it."

"Break—what?" uttered Hester, staring at the Captain, and feeling as if she were turning into a cold perspiration.

"Why, I conclude that Miss Lucy wished to make known, in a roundabout way, that she was tired of me. And I have acted upon it."

"Dear Captain Kerleton, you are entirely mistaken," said Hester. "I can assure you Lucy is perfectly faithful to you. The work she had to stay in for was in preparation for her marriage."

"It's too late now," said the Captain, with redoubled obstinacy, "for I think I know somebody who would suit me better."

Hester sat opposite to him, glued to her chair, unable to utter a word, and wondering whether he had taken leave of his senses. He, however, was not glued to his, for he suddenly rose from it, and dropped down on his knees close to Hester.

"My dear Miss Hester, it's you and nobody else. I do think you the most charming, amiable creature, and I have transferred my affection from Miss Lucy to you. Will you have me?"

Hester was never so taken aback in her life, and a suspicion did cross her, in earnest, that Lucy's refusal in the morning must have put the Captain's brains to flight. He took forcible possession of her hands, and would neither get up, nor let her do so. While they were in this ridiculous position, who should come bustling into the room, with the sugar-basin, but Aunt Copp.

"Why, what on earth—Hester! what's the matter?"

The Captain took a move sideways on his knees, and addressed himself to Aunt Copp, which afforded an opportunity to Hester of rising.

"Miss Lucy has cut me, ma'am. That is, she acted—purposely—so as to make me cut her; and my affections are now fixed on Miss Hester. I was on the point of praying her to name her own day for our union, when you interrupted us."

"Good patience deliver us!" ejaculated Aunt Copp, her mouth opening with astonishment, and remaining so. "What is all this?"

Hester could not speak for laughing then, the whole thing struck

her as so supremely absurd. There knelt Captain Kerleton in the everlasting regimentals, his hands thrown theatrically out towards Mrs. Copp, and his face twisted into a die-away expression towards Hester, while Aunt Copp stood arrested in the middle of the room, one hand grasping the sugar-basin, the other the silver tongs, her face turning to petrifaction, and her eyes rolling from one to the other in a sort of horror.

"Niece Hester, what *is* this? I insist upon knowing."

"I think Captain Kerleton meant to play off a little joke with me, Aunt Copp," she answered. "Lucy, it seems, offended him this morning, but they will make it all right again."

"But, by heaven, it is no joke, Miss Hester," interrupted the Captain, springing up. "I mean it as real earnest."

"Then allow me to assure you, Captain Kerleton, that I shall never treat it but as a joke, now and always," Hester impressively whispered. "And pray let neither of us recur to it again, even in thought."

"Then you won't have me? You mean to insinuate that?" he reiterated aloud, pulling a face as long as his arm.

"I would not have you, Captain Kerleton, if you were worth your weight in gold," she said. "So let the joke pass away, and we had better say nothing about it to Lucy."

"Highty-tighty," cried Aunt Copp, recovering from her petrifaction and going forward, "but you can't do these things, Captain. Shake off one sister and take up another! I see what it is: you have been getting up your temper because Lucy crossed your whim this morning. So now you must get it down again. We were just going out to take a walk, and the best thing you can do is to go with us. Why, you would be as bad as a sailor."

"A sailor?" sullenly repeated the Captain.

"Yes, sir, a sailor. They have sweethearts by the dozen, in each port, and that's well known. Many's the wrangle I have had with my boy about that: he vowing, by all that's blue, that *he* had not, and I knowing he had. Don't tell me. But you can't have two in a house, Captain. So sit down there and get cool while we put our things on."

He went out with Aunt Copp and Lucy. Hester remained at home, truly uncomfortable, and deliberating whether she ought not to tell Lucy what had taken place. For if the thing were not a joke —as she kept trying to persuade herself, though the more she tried, the more incomprehensible a joke it grew—was a man capable of these violent changes and fits of temper one to whom they ought to entrust Lucy?

The following day dawned, and they all rose as usual, little thinking what it was to bring forth. For how many a one has a day risen in happiness to close in sorrow, dark as the darkest night! It was not strictly sorrow, however, that came to them,

rather mortification. Lucy went out to spend the day with some friends, who had invited her for a farewell visit previous to her marriage; and as Hester and Aunt Copp were seated at work, after dinner, the latter spoke.

"Well, I think I must have made a kaleidoscope of my spectacles, for he is ever changing; now it is he, now it is not! Hester, *is* that the Captain, or not?"

Hester followed the direction of her aunt's eyes, which were fixed on a gentleman who was advancing up the road in face of them. "Yes—no—yes," was her contradictory reply. "I declare, Aunt Copp, I am not sure. One minute it looks like him, and the next it does not. If it is the Captain, he has discarded his regimentals."

It was not Captain Kerleton, but one who bore a striking resemblance to him.

"I know!" exclaimed Aunt Copp, with awakened interest. "It *is* his brother. I wrote for him."

"You, Aunt Copp?"

"Yes, to come to the wedding. But I told him to wait for a second letter. He is come too soon."

Phœby brought in a card, "Major Kerleton," and ushered in the Major after it, a cordial-mannered man. He proceeded to explain his business, and poor Aunt Copp was ready to sink through her chair with vexation, for it was she who had been the means of introducing the Captain to Seaford, and—worse still—to Lucy.

All that they had observed as strange in his conduct was now accounted for. *Captain Kerleton was a lunatic.* Some years previously, when in India, he had met with an accident, which caused concussion of the brain, and he had never entirely recovered his intellects. At that time the Captain was on the point of marriage with a young lady, to whom he was much attached, but the match was then broken off, and this seemed to have left some impression on his mind, which it could not get rid of. He came home, and had since lived with his brother, and years had wrought so much improvement in him that he would pass muster in society without suspicion, as he had done at Seaford: the only point on which his intellects were still wrong was a propensity to make offers of marriage. "I have had no end of trouble with him on this score," said the Major, "for if he has made a fool of one lady in the last eight years, he has of fifty. Of course, when I am on the spot, I whisper a word, and matters are soon rectified; but once or twice, when he has taken advantage of my absence from home, to start off, as he did this time, there has been more trouble to get them straight. It is five years ago this summer," continued the Major, lowering his voice, "that he found his way into Yorkshire. I was taken ill—seriously ill—on my journey, and was absent longer than I had ever been. By George! when I came back, and proceeded to hunt up Richard, I found him a married man."

"A married man!" uttered Mrs. Copp.

"He had gammoned some young lady into marrying him: a very nice sort of girl she was, too; of respectable family. But they were poor, thought they had a catch in Dick, and hurried on the match."

"Mercy on us!" breathed Aunt Copp. "Is she living?"

"To be sure she is. She——"

"Why, then, the Captain is a married man now," she screamed, unceremoniously interrupting Major Kerleton.

"Neither more nor less," returned the Major. "When his young wife, poor thing, found out Dick's infirmity, she refused to remain with him—and quite right of her, too, I think. She has lived since then on the Continent with a married sister; Dick—or, at least, I, for him—allowing her a yearly income."

"But what a wicked man he must be to attempt to marry my niece when he has a wife living," remonstrated Aunt Copp.

"Not wicked," interposed the Major. "Upon this point Richard is *insane;* the doctors say incurably so. He would marry twenty wives if he could get the opportunity, and never know that he was doing wrong."

"A regular Bluebeard. He ought to be tried for bigamy," groaned Aunt Copp. "But it has been a blessed escape for Lucy."

"It has indeed. Not but that I am sincerely grieved he should ever have been brought into contact with your niece, for this *exposé* cannot be a pleasant one for her. He left home, it seems, the very day I did, and must have lost no time."

"He ought to be confined," said Mrs. Copp.

"He is so sane on other points, that to confine him would be scarcely justifiable," returned the Major. "But I shall learn a lesson by this last vagary, and shall place a watch over him, if I have to leave home again."

"Sane on other points," repeated Aunt Copp; "I don't know about that. He seems to have unlimited command of money."

"Not unlimited. His fortune is a large one, and he has command over a portion of it."

"Perhaps you'll walk this way, sir," said Mrs. Copp, rising, and leading the way upstairs to a spare bedroom. Hester followed. "There!" she said, exhibiting the curious lot of presents Lucy had received, "perhaps you can tell me what is to be done with all these, Major Kerleton. The Captain sent them here, and we could not stop him."

Major Kerleton laughed heartily. "Poor Dick!" he said, "this is another of his tricks. He gives away all before him."

"He has supplied the parish here," was Aunt Copp's rejoinder. "What is to be done with these?"

"Whatever you please. If there are any worth keeping, pray retain them. The rest dispose of any way—throw them away if they are no better worth."

"Several of the articles are of value. The watch and chain especially, and some rings. But, sir," and Mrs. Copp drew herself up to her full height, "my niece will not allow her to keep them, or anything else."

"I hope and trust she will," warmly returned the Major. "I shall pray Miss Lucy to accept them *from me.* Ah, my dear ladies," he continued, taking a hand of each, "I only wish it was in my power to make any reparation to her for the annoyance which my unfortunate brother has brought on her and you. Pecuniary compensation is out of the question, but ——"

"Sir!" interrupted Aunt Copp, in an awful voice, "do you know that you are addressing persons of your own standing in life? The sister and daughter of one who was of your own rank, the Major Halliwell. He traces his descent to nobility, and not far distant. In George the Third's time ——"

"My dear lady, you are mistaking me. I was about to say that the only compensation possible is the hearty expression of my heartfelt and genuine sympathy: it is not in my power to offer any other."

"Not any," responded Aunt Copp, with stony rigidity. "The sooner such a lunatic as he is is out of Seaford the better for all parties."

So thought Major Kerleton; and he started that same day with the poor madman for London.

Of course the event to Lucy Halliwell could not be otherwise than deeply mortifying, but her heart had never been engaged in it, and she soon grew to laugh at it heartily. They took to calling it "Lucy's Adventure," for it was the only romantic incident that ever happened to Lucy.

What was now to be the career of Hester and Lucy Halliwell? The year in their home at Seaford had expired, they had their £500 each, and must look out for some means of earning a livelihood. It is certain that young women in a respectable sphere of life, when left unprovided for by the death of parents, require more sympathy than any other class. It may be they have a little money: it is to be hoped that daughters so left generally have. This they proceed to embark in various ways, according to their capacities and the ideas they have imbibed in their station of society. But let the reader be very sure that there are few of these unprotected women but have to bear a crushing weight of struggle and sorrow. Anxious perplexity, pinching want, heart-breaking care—these are often theirs; and for many there is no turn, no worldly rest, till they find it in the grave.

Aunt Copp, who remained with them to wind up affairs at Seaford, proposed several things. One was that Lucy should go out as governess, for which she was so well qualified, and that Hester should have a home with her at Liverpool: which she should be

proud and happy to give her, she observed, and turn over to her all the sewing and pudding-making. But they decided, themselves, upon establishing a ladies' boarding-school. It appeared more congenial than anything else, and they both felt that they had the qualifications and will to do their *full duty* to the children who might be entrusted to their care: Hester in contributing to their comforts, and teaching them, as she phrased it, plain sewing and grammar and spelling; Lucy in imparting her own high standard of education and accomplishments.

Where was it to be? They decided upon the neighbourhood of London, and departed for the great city; but they had much trouble to settle themselves. Some of the suburbs they found overstocked with schools, some were not deemed highly healthy, some had no suitable house that they could rent. They did settle themselves at last, after spending a purse of money, as they said, over those whirling omnibuses. The precise locality need not be named, but it is a well-known one. They took a capital house, large and convenient, enclosed from the high road by a wall; with a pretty garden in front and a playground behind. They paid eighty pounds a year for it, besides taxes; a rent that frightened them. Quarter day never drew near, for many years, but it brought to them a heart-sickening. The next step was to furnish. The furniture from their old home was the worse for wear, and though it had filled a small house, it was lost in a large one. So they bought new for the drawing room and for the children's bedroom that was to be, with desks and forms for the school-room, disposing the old about the house as they best could, and occasionally, as time went on, buying some almost indispensable article, as they thought they could spare the money.

Of course they had sent out cards and advertised, and then they sat down in their new house, and waited for pupils. The first quarter they received some demands for circulars, but nothing came of it: the next they had three day-scholars, two sisters and another. Hester then took the resolution to call at the principal houses in the neighbourhood, and urge her hope of patronage. Whether they liked her appearance she did not know, but soon after that they had eleven day-scholars and five boarders; so they thought success was coming all at once, and had indistinct visions of retiring with a fortune.

(*To be continued.*)

IDLE TIME NOT IDLY SPENT.

THIS was Sir Henry Walton's definition of angling; but it admits of a much wider application. It suggests that it is possible to waste time wisely, which is a lesson much needed in these days of high pressure and competition. We are becoming gluttons of work. We debauch our minds by using them to excess. A morbid appetite for toil is being cultivated. Many men are almost incapable of taking a holiday, and seem to have lost the power of enjoying anything except work.

That it is possible to get into a condition of caring for nothing but work may be seen by the case of Sir Walter Scott. For years he turned out twelve volumes yearly; but no constitution could stand such an amount of brain-pressure. When Dr. Abercromby expostulated with him as to his enormous amount of brain work, and said, "Really, Sir Walter, you must not work," Scott's answer was—"I tell you what it is, doctor; Molly, when she puts the kettle on, might just as well say, 'Kettle, kettle, don't boil!'" Southey became equally incapable of desisting from work. Dr. Arnold observed of him, that he even worked as he walked—for exercise it could not be called; he was then reading and annotating.

The harder a man works the more need he has of recreation. We may appear to be spending time idly when we amuse ourselves, but the time is by no means idly spent if it creates over again and fits for more work exhausted animal or mental spirits. Idleness is not all idleness, for play and diversion are not less necessary for healthy life than rest and refreshment. St. John the Evangelist, as Cassian relates, amusing himself one day with a tame partridge on his hand, was asked by a huntsman, how such a man as he could spend his time in so unprofitable a manner? To whom St. John replied, "Why dost thou not carry thy bow always bent?" "Because," answered the huntsman, "if it were always bent, I fear it would lose its spring, and become useless." "Be not surprised then," replied the Apostle, "that I should sometimes remit a little of my close attention of spirit to enjoy a little recreation, that I may afterwards employ myself more fervently in Divine contemplation."

As the man who eats little eats most, because he lives longer to eat, so he who works wisely, and therefore not too hard, really gets through more work, because he lives longer. So true is the proverb that often the half is more than the whole. An undergraduate knows that someone he wishes to beat at the degree examination only reads six hours a day. "If," he argues, "I can work ten or twelve hours I shall get twice as good a place." But does he? No; he tries it, and breaks down, because he forgot that sometimes the half is more

than the whole; that six hours with rest and recreation is better than twelve employed without them. It was a rule which Loyola imposed upon his followers, that after two hours of work the mind should always have some relaxation.

One of the best kinds of recreation is some hobby, whereby we ride or drive out of the ruts of our common life. It may be a very cheap and humble one; it may seem trifling. Our knowledge, for instance, of botany, chemistry, geology, or other 'ologies may be very small, but it is astonishing what an interest may be given to even the commonest walk by the knowledge of some of the mere rudiments of science. Mr. George Henry Lewes was one day dredging a road-side pond. A glass jar stood beside him, and into it he put all his "finds." Presently an Irish labourer came to him, and inquired, with a sneer, whether he was fishing for salmon. Mr. Lewes quietly said, "Yes." But the man did not go away, and when Mr. Lewes's net landed a big black-and-yellow triton the Irishman's curiosity was fairly aroused. He saw the many other living things which the jar held, and as to which he asked many questions, all kindly answered. The labourer stayed till Mr. Lewes had to leave, and his remark now was, "Och! then, and it's a fine thing to be able to name all God's creatures."

We must not, however, make too much of what may be called Scientific Recreation. Many have no natural liking for it: no tastes in that direction. For these the recreative change lies in direct play. Socrates, one of the wisest of men, is said, for variety of recreation, to have ridden a wooden horse. When not in humour for physical exercise, he played upon the lyre, which tuned and tempered his mind. Plato, like his master, was a great believer in recreation, and excelled in all the Grecian exercises. Boileau and Luther were great skittle players. The latter relaxed himself by playing on the guitar and the flute, and by turning articles in wood. Voltaire's amusement was private theatricals and marionettes.

When Diocletian was petitioned to resume the imperial purple, which he had resigned, he replied to the messengers: "You would not have asked such a thing of me if you saw the fine melons I have now ripening, and the plantations about my villa that I have made." The idle time of Horace, Virgil, Lord Bacon, Pope, Cowper, and of many other writers was spent not idly but with great benefit to their writing in gardening. The great engineer George Stephenson was troubled by his cucumbers, which *would* grow crooked; but he had large glass jars constructed, into which he inserted the growing fruit, saying, "I think I have bothered them noo," and then they grew straight.

Sir Walter Scott was an expert wielder of the axe, and competed with his men at Abbotsford as to the paucity of blows by which a tree could be brought down. The wood rang ever and anon with laughter while he shared their labours. Among other celebrated

woodmen may be mentioned Pitt, Wilberforce and Mr. Gladstone. Archbishop Whately believed in exercise more than in physic. When he felt out of sorts he took up his axe and went out to hew away at some ponderous trunk. Some good people thought that the Archbishop must be a very cruel master because they saw, one piercingly cold, snowy day, in his grounds, a scantily-clothed old man cutting wood. They were not a little surprised to find that it was the Archbishop himself. "Who is your doctor?" said someone to Carlyle. "My best doctor," he replied, "is a horse."

"I have often heard," said Cicero, "that when Lucilius and Scipio used to go into the country, escaping from their labours in the city as from bondage, they would amuse themselves and play boys' parts incredibly well. I dare hardly repeat of such men how they used to go picking up shells along the shore, and descend to all sorts of frolic and recreation. In fact," he continues, "no one seems to me to be free who does not sometimes do nothing."

At Laleham, Dr. Arnold used to leap, bathe and row with his pupils, and always delighted in what he called "a skirmish across country." We never could understand why grown-up men are laughed at if they indulge in play; but even a wise man like Dr. Samuel Clarke was afraid of fools. Once, while exercising himself with a friend in leaping over chairs he said, "Now we must stop, for a fool is coming." An ecclesiastic coming to visit Cardinal Richelieu, found his eminence trying to see how high a point of a wall he could jump. Instead of appearing surprised, the visitor had tact enough to commence jumping against the Cardinal, taking care, however, to jump a little lower. He jumped himself into a good benefice.

Livingstone always regretted that he had not spent more of his time in playing with children, especially with his own. The idle time of many eminent men has been spent not idly but very profitably in doing this. Henry IV. of France was a great lover of his "little platoon of children," and delighted in their gambols. One day, when trotting round the room on his hands and knees, with the Dauphin on his back, and the other children urging him on to a gallop in imitation of a horse, an ambassador suddenly entered and surprised the royal family in the midst of their play. Henry, without rising, asked, "Have *you* children, M. l'Ambassadeur?"

"Yes, sire."

"In that case I proceed with the sport."

Who would have thought that the dignified and stately William Pitt should have found his greatest recreation in the society of children? On one occasion some children were trying to blacken his face with burnt cork when a servant announced that Lords Castlereagh and Liverpool desired to see him on business. "Let them wait in the other room," was the answer; and the great minister instantly turned to battle with his young assailants, catching up a

cushion and belabouring them with it in glorious fun. After some time he said: "Stop; this will do. I could easily beat you all, but we must not keep these grandees waiting any longer." Both Napoleon and Wellington were fond of playing with children. The former would take the infant king of Rome in his arms, and standing in front of a mirror, make the oddest grimaces in the glass. One of his favourite games was Blind Man's Buff.

Parents and teachers who, in their anxiety to force children's education, think that every moment they spend away from books is wasted should be reminded that young people who rise early in their classes at school or at college are generally like those who rise very early in the morning—"conceited all the forenoon (of life) and stupid all the afternoon." The play-time of children may seem idle time, but it is by no means idly spent, for it helps them to grow, and lays down that basis of physical health upon which nearly all success in life is built.

Many busy men get into the habit of bolting their food, especially their mid-day meal, and think that any time spent at it is idle time. In this way they bring upon themselves indigestion and other kinds of ill-health which waste time with a vengeance and shorten life. An extra ten minutes given to a meal may seem idle time, but it is by no means idly spent, because slow, deliberate eating of food is necessary if we would get out of it the greatest amount of nourishment and therefore of energy.

Nor is an extra hour in bed in the morning or even an occasional day in bed necessarily time wasted. To rest the nerves and the tired system generally is not to spend time idly. The opinions of learned men have differed much as to the time required for sound sleep. Baxter fixed upon four hours, Wesley on six, and Lord Coke on seven. Sir Walter Scott required eight hours' sound sleep to keep his brain in full working order. Dr. Fowler, of Salisbury, a veteran well-known in scientific circles, and to the last a frequenter of the British Association, said that one essential of long life was to "lie abed in the morning until you are *done enough*." He lived to ninety-eight.

Idle time is spent not idly if when travelling or on a holiday we refuse to hurry away from interesting places until we have observed, and, as it were, made our own all that there is to be seen. Globe-trotters think that their time is being idled away if they stop for a single hour at one place, though it be as interesting as Rome or Pompeii. Watch in hand, they never cease to complain of this "creeping train." They are as anxious about their time as are sermon-listeners, who, though they do nothing on their return from church, grudge every moment to the preacher.

RACHEL.

By M. E. Davenport.

"RACHEL! Rachel! for well nigh twenty minutes hast thou been standing in that same place looking at that same stone wall. I fear sadly thy thoughts have been wandering on vain subjects instead of being fixed on things suitable for thee to think of, such as Brother Jabez's last discourse. Thou must wage fiercer warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil, or they will prove too strong for thee."

So spake Mistress Jael Winter as she stood in the shadow of her richly laden portico. The few rays of sunshine that shot in here and there between the leaves fell on her white muslin cap and kerchief, and actually played about her firm mouth, and glistened in her black eyes, taking liberties with that face which neither smiles nor tears had dared to take for many years.

She waited a moment to see that her words had taken effect, then turned again to the house.

Some half-dozen yards distant, with her elbows resting on the top of the garden gate, stood Mistress Jael's niece, Rachel Winter, though, as a stranger would at once have conjectured, there was no blood relationship between the two. Rachel bore the same name as her aunt, wore the same dress, minus the cap, framed her thoughts in the same style of words; but there all resemblance ceased.

Rachel's character, like Mistress Jael's, was written very legibly on her face. There was the highly imaginative brow, the dreamy, dusky eyes beneath, and a little mouth, whose want of firmness was atoned for by its sweetness. The dark brown hair, which *would* be wavy, however much Aunt Jael might deplore it, was coiled up into as little space as possible at the back; clearly the glory of a woman was accounted only as something to be hidden here; but the perfect shape of the little head, with all its womanly grace, was more evidently shown.

It moved half round as Mistress Jael's words came clear and strong across the lawn, and a faint flush coloured her cheek. Then she stayed yet another moment in the same place, and murmured softly to herself.

"The world, the flesh, and the devil! Truly it is a beautiful world outside here! And my other world, Aunt Jael, Cousin James, my father, and Brother Jabez, they are all good. I do not see how harm could come from them. Then the flesh—well *I* must be the flesh. Ah! truly, I have been tempted to wish for things that would not be fitting. I have been dreaming all this time of *him*, of what he said when I thanked him for helping me over the brook. But then I did not ask to meet him; he happened to be there. It was

no fault of mine, and I could but say, 'I thank thee,' when he had been so kind, and offered him my hand. I could not know that he would hold it as he did and—Oh! he is there!"

The girl's face looked more bewitching than ever with its shy, hot glow, as she bowed her head in answer to the raising of a brown hat outside, and then ran indoors.

The possessor of the brown hat, who had had the garden-gate in view some minutes before he showed himself, certainly did not look like a member of Brother Jabez's flock. His clothes and bearing betokened an intimacy with the gay world, and not only with the Bohemian part of it. The first thing to attract the notice of an onlooker was the atmosphere of perfect self-possession, perfect calm which seemed to envelop him; that calm which is only found in a man who is sure of himself; intelligently sure. The grey eyes had a steady, penetrating look in them as they rested on Mistress Jael's face; a look which seemed to be reading more than the outward form and expression. But as they fell on Rachel they grew a shade darker, and flashed with something it would be hard to define; something Rachel had the full benefit of as she raised her brown eyes for that half second.

It was only a few days before this that the little incident occurred which Rachel's unruly thoughts would run on.

She was coming home from the town that lay about a mile off, and had chosen the path through the wood, as being the coolest in the heat of the day. But to her great dismay, when she reached the little brook at the far end, whose only bridge was a row of stepping stones, she found that the heavy rains of the previous day had swollen the waters. There was a moment's indecision as to which would be the worst alternative: going back again and round another way, or getting her feet wet crossing here, with a slight risk of being over-balanced by the force of the water.

The latter proved the least distasteful, and she was beginning warily to pick her way, when a gentleman, who had been an unseen watcher of her dismay, appeared on the opposite bank, asked permission to help her across, and at once walked onto the stones and held out his hand.

When safe on the other side, the stranger should of course have raised his hat and let her go. But he didn't. He held the little hand in his own for a moment instead, and watched the colour come and go on her face, with most evident satisfaction at being himself its cause, and made some little honeyed speech which came far more naturally to his tongue than Rachel's simple "I thank thee" had come to hers, but which she took for just what it seemed to mean. And it was well for her perhaps that this once she was right. Fred Carson did mean all he said. But he had to release her at last, and not another word could he get from her. He had frightened away her speech.

But to return to our starting point.

Rachel satisfied her aunt that the cakes had not taken much harm, and then stood before the broad dresser, with her hands in a basin of dough, which she was supposed to be preparing for the oven; but there would certainly be a famine in the land if all the bread had to come through her fingers.

For five minutes she had worked well, then she had deliberately dipped them in the flour, rubbed off the paste, folded them together, and now was gazing out of the open window in front of her, totally oblivious of all such things as half-finished bread or a cooling oven, and particularly unconscious of her aunt Jael's presence just behind her.

She was not allowed to remain long in this blissful ignorance.

Mistress Jael had watched her niece curiously for the last few days, and an indefinable something in her looks and manner had aroused her to the fact that a girl of eighteen is no longer a child; though what had happened to bring her womanhood to the surface she was at a loss to conjecture. She knew of no stranger in the little village. Strangers seldom came there; and even if they did, Rachel was half bound to her cousin James, whom she was to marry, all circumstances and parties agreeing, in a short time.

In spite of this knowledge there was an unmistakable difference in her niece, which showed that the surface of her nature had been ruffled, and gave indications of the feeling that had been at work; and Mistress Jael, though far at sea as to the root of the matter, proceeded to give her niece an extempore address which covered both possibilities and probabilities.

Her view was taken from her own experience, which had not been a happy one. She enlarged on the wickedness and folly of discontent when our lives are for a time at the side of still waters, and the future regret that would be turned back to them; and then skilfully steering her topic into the troubled waters of love and marriage, she grew eloquent on the subject of the selfishness and inconsistency of man in general and the opposite qualities of man in particular, meaning her son, and finished up by tragically referring to her broad view of one side of humanity.

"The hand thou thinkest strong to protect thee will but prove heavy to crush thee. I say this to thee now, Rachel, because to-day, somehow, for the first time, it has struck me, as I have watched thee, that thou art no longer a child. The woman's heart is moving within thee, and I would fain have thee learn the lesson I have learnt, without my experience. Surely one life is enough! And thou art not fitted for such rough teaching. Thou wouldst not live to be moulded into my form. The first stroke of the chisel such as I received would shiver thee to atoms. One comfort there is, however: things do seem now as though just ready for thy hand. While with me there is no chance of thy falling into danger, and thou art not to run away until thy cousin James makes thee his wife."

Rachel finished her bread after her aunt left her, quickly and deftly, and rather as though she wanted to keep her thoughts fixed on that and nothing else for awhile.

When it was finished she went to the old-fashioned staircase window. It was a favourite nook of hers, and she made a very pretty picture as she half sat, half reclined on the cushions.

At first her head drooped on the window frame. The shock of her aunt's words was still upon her. It was the first time she had been spoken to directly on such a subject; the first time she had been taught suspicion. Bitter as Mistress Jael's experience had been, it had not robbed her of the common-sense which told her that the surest way to warp a child's moral nature is to plant the seeds of distrust there. She would not have spoken now if she had not noticed this change in her niece.

It was nearly thirty years since she had settled down at Wood End, a grave, stern widow, very little different from what she was now, with the same dark cloud of sorrow resting on her brow; the same grim determination to suffer and be strong, but strong in her own strength. No one there knew her history, without it were the old servant who had come with her, and she was nearly as impenetrable as her mistress.

Some ten years later the little motherless Rachel was brought by her father and left in his sister-in-law's charge. Left as he well knew in kind, though strict, hands. Mistress Jael's character, both past and present, was fully known to him. In such an atmosphere had Rachel's early days been passed. There had been neither foolish fondness nor unjust severity. Perhaps some characters would not have waxed so pure and healthy, even though they had possessed more moral vigour to start with; they would have needed something more tangible to take hold of; but Rachel's imaginative brain and loving heart created an independent world of her own, and folded a garment of all that was lovable round those whom she wished to love.

And then the pleasant monotony of her life of late years had been lightened by the anticipation of the great change that her twenty-first birthday was to bring; when she was to give her hand, if her heart could go with it, to her cousin James, Aunt Jael's only child.

The child who, according to the last will and command of a most unnatural father, was to inherit in his twenty-fifth year, if he kept certain conditions, a large fortune. In case of his not keeping them, he was cut off with a shilling. The conditions were that until the appointed time he was to live apart from his mother. One meeting would forfeit all. A liberal sum of money was to be expended on his education; every advantage of instruction and travel was to be his; but he must never until the allotted time was passed set foot on the threshold of that dwelling which his mother had made her home.

People said that from the hour the will was read Jael Winter

never smiled again. It seemed as though the tide of human sympathy, which had before been so full and strong within her, was stopped. Contempt, neglect, cruelty had all hitherto proved ineffectual hindrances in its course. But this last aim at her happiness, given on his dying bed, was the acme of her misery. Her husband had certainly meant entire separation of mother and child. He never dreamed that the poor, apparently broken-spirited woman could live on her despair and anger so long. But he was mistaken.

Though with Jael all feeling seemed to have died out, yet something else sprang up in its stead; some of the energy and spirit of her youth returned to her; and when she had ruled both for herself and her child that it was better they should part, and had settled down in Allerslie, alone, it was more as one for whom the bitterness of death is passed, and who dared life to bring a heavier trial than had gone before.

To Rachel, the characters of both husband and wife were known, and the older she grew the better was she able to comprehend the nature of the mischief. It was only another story of an unequal marriage, and inequality of soul. Her uncle, from the information she had gathered, seemed to have been, at first, an easy-going, selfish man; intensely selfish both by nature and education. With mental gifts of a high order, he had been able to cut out for himself a pathway sufficiently removed from the ordinary road to satisfy even his self-love and vanity. No obstacle had ever proved insurmountable, until he met the beautiful quakeress and tried to make her yield to his power as so many others had done.

With her for a long time his efforts were unsuccessful, but that very non-success gave a double meaning to them. What he couldn't have became of course all the more desirable. Every talent to please which he possessed was exerted in the cause, and at length proved not in vain.

Jael Dakin had been fighting against her reason, not her heart, while she held out so long; and though the struggle had been a desperate one, yet she was more glad than otherwise when her lover's importunity compelled her to give in.

She knew they were unsuited to each other in almost every respect. She was not blind. She saw his overpowering conceit, his entire selfishness. And yet she loved him; perhaps through sympathy with the seeming reality of his love for her. She married him with her eyes open to what the result must be, and to what it might be. Her friends wondered how such a woman could exalt a man's mental gifts so highly as to hide his moral deficiencies. But they were mistaken; the weakness was not hidden from her; and she may have had some vague idea of dividing her own strength with him. If so, the idea in her case proved its own falseness.

Hers was in the main a strictly conscientious nature; conscientious to a fault, if such a thing be possible. It almost amounted to mor-

bidness in some of its details; and there was no healthy influence to set against it.

Her husband's first indifference turned to contempt, then to positive dislike; and it seemed as though the energy he had used to win her he would now use to crush her.

But for a long time he was unsuccessful. Jael had taken him, not for better, but for worse; and she made her love last out in spite of all the blows aimed at it. It was only the last drop in the cup which proved too much. Forgiveness then seemed as impossible as forgetfulness, and the knowledge that she had brought it all on herself brought no softening influence.

Love for Rachel had long been almost the only ray of sunshine in her heart, and that had entered against her will. She had done her best to close up every niche and crevice; but there was a quiet power in that warm, loving nature which would make itself felt, and she was obliged to yield.

Her greatest wish now was to see Rachel the wife of her son, from whom she constantly all these years had received letters which might have made glad the heart of any mother: letters which proved him possessed of his father's intellect in addition to the heart which his father had lacked.

Rachel had known for a long time the arrangement laid out for her in the future, and up to now had never had a thought in contradiction to it. But somehow as she sat in the staircase window that afternoon, a rebellious feeling would creep into her mind, and though she was horrified and frightened at it, yet she couldn't turn it out.

She pictured to herself her cousin James. A little man, with black eyes like Aunt Jael's; an ugly-shaped head, with great projections here and there; a largely developed bump for this and another for something else, as he was so clever—Rachel had not yet dived far into phrenology—a high, wide forehead, most absurdly too big for the rest of his face.

And then the clothes! Light drab, made like Brother Jabez's—and the wide-brimmed hat—and—well—before she got any further, her thoughts wandered off to a certain brown tweed suit of a different make; to a head that looked to possess all the intellect without having it so objectionably prominent; to eyes that were like the grey dawn, with the promise of a bright warm day at the back; and to a mouth that was nearly hidden by an auburn moustache, though you could just tell it was firm and strong and kind; at least, Rachel thought she could tell.

We think she must have made good use of that one quick glance she owned to giving him.

Then part of her aunt's warning came back to her, "Say *no* to him in your heart before it is too late! The hand you think so strong to protect will prove strong to crush!" Yes, thought Rachel, the hand that helped me over the brook was able to crush when he said good-bye.

An amused, conscious, happy look stole across her face, and she went through a sort of dumb pantomime of putting one little hand within the other and giving it a desperately hard squeeze.

But in spite of Rachel's weak faith in the truth of her aunt's words as far as her new acquaintance was concerned, other possible and unfortunate consequences of any closer intimacy would force themselves upon her consciousness.

There was the remotest probability that she might get to like the owner of those grey eyes; and then how about Cousin James? Poor child, the position was a novel one to her. She had neither the experiences of a score of romantically matured girl friends, nor the heart details of numberless fictitious heroines to tell her what falling in love meant. She had to fall back on her own instinct, and though that instinct seldom fails in speaking clearly, it is wonderful what various interpretations we can give to its words.

Rachel decided after much reflection that of course she was not in love then, and of course she could keep herself from falling in love afterwards. She would contrive not to put herself in his way again; but if circumstances compelled her to meet him—why then she would remember her aunt's warning and treat him so coldly that he wouldn't have any opportunity of making advances.

But circumstances did not combine for several days to give Rachel an opportunity of showing her great strength of resistance; and, to tell the truth, she was rather disappointed. It is not always pleasant to feel you have a quantity of superfluous energy lying useless. Mistress Jael had taken a severe cold, and for nearly a week was confined to her bed. Rachel's attendance in the sick room was constant, and she never got further in her out-door walks than the garden gate.

There she certainly had twice shown her strength of mind by running away as the brown hat appeared in the distance; but the sense of victory would be far stronger if she came into closer quarters with the enemy, she thought. There was something ignominious in flight every time. But she positively dare not take hold of the opportunity: it would have to take hold of her.

One afternoon towards the end of the week, Mistress Jael, noticing her niece's somewhat tired looks, said:

"Rachel, thou hadst better have an early tea, then put on thy things and go down to the village for those books which Brother Jabez promised to lend me. And thou mightest rest in the wood awhile, and be reading one of the volumes. It will contain nothing but what is suitable for thy meditation."

"Yes, Aunt Jael," was the answer. "And now thou art somewhat better, thou must not be anxious if I linger a little in the wood, as the weather is so beautiful and I have not been out for so long."

Mistress Jael gave her consent to anything in reason, and after the early tea Rachel departed.

Now the surest way to gain strength to overcome the second temptation is to resist the first, and Rachel felt that her protecting armour had grown some degrees stronger when she left the house. For had she not steadily refused to give just one more glance at herself in the mirror? And had not the ribbon, which had lain hidden so long in her drawer, been looked at and put back again? And had she not brought Cousin James's last letter with her to read in the wood?

Surely she had done all this, and it was not surprising that an unusual amount of self-confidence was the result.

Brother Jabez had the books ready for her. They contained a three-volumed discourse: "On a soul born to tribulation—baptised in the waters of Marah—nourished on roots out of dry ground."

Rachel took them, then walked down through the village, and out at the wood end, congratulating herself on having escaped the notice of those grey eyes.

But her congratulations were premature. If she had only glanced at the little inn, instead of looking in quite the other direction, she would have seen, close to the open window, reclining on several chairs, the six foot of calm, cool laziness which she was so anxious to avoid. I have said calm and cool. The adjectives were only applicable until she came in sight, and then—well, it is wonderful sometimes to notice what a little thing will overcome the immense amount of inertia some people possess.

Fred Carson was on his feet before you could say—what he said when he saw her.

He seemed on the point of hurrying after her when a sudden thought struck him; he remained where he was till she was out of the range of any inquisitive eyesight pertaining to the village folk. Then he lost no time, but with firm, swift steps, soon gained the entrance to the wood.

Rachel wandered on some distance, not keeping to any path, till she reached her favourite nook, just half-way down the little wooded glen through which the stream ran.

It was a very pretty spot. Here and there the water ran in and out between great moss-covered boulders, and then settled down into clear, deep pools; where you caught the reflection of passing clouds overhead, or of your own face as you bent to watch the little pebbles roll one over another.

A sudden turn brought one to a tolerably open space that the waters did not cover, and to the entrance to a cave. Rachel half lay down on the grass and moss just inside, and making the "Dry roots" and "Waters of Marah" into an elbow-cushion, she listened to the distant echo of falling drops somewhere. Drop, drop, drop, they fell, with a low, liquid sound that was inexpressibly soothing, and harmonised well with the humming of the insects outside, and murmuring ripple of the water below. It was the very air to build

castles in, and for a little time she lay and revelled in this undying style of architecture. Presently she gave a half-sigh and raised her head to look round—to see Fred Carson standing about three feet from her. He was leaning against a rock, and so quietly that there was no room left to doubt of his having been there some time; of his having both seen and heard her. Of the latter he made no secret. His first words as she rose to her feet were :—

"Don't you wish that our future were like those waters: so clear that we could see far away into it; see what amount of mischief a storm would be likely to make, what projections would be most likely to be thrown down, how many loose pebbles at the bottom would not be able to stand firm?"

Fred Carson never showed his rare tact more clearly than when he quietly, and in a modulated voice, joined in with Rachel's reveries, giving her time, during his first words, to recover her self-possession.

Rachel had been standing with her eyes fixed on the ground whilst he spoke out a thought which had half been her own; but when he had finished, she looked up, timidly at first, then more naturally as she met a quiet, composed gaze which could in no wise disturb her.

"Yea, truly," she said. "The wish has often been my own; but then, again, I have thought perhaps the distant shadows might cast a gloomy shade on all the brighter days between."

"But some days might be so bright as nearly to absorb the shadows, Miss Winter; and after all, it is as well to have them mixed; we see things better by contrast. Come and look up the glen at the battle which is going on between light and shade just now."

He took Rachel's hand, and helped her on to a great stone in the middle of the stream, standing himself on the bank a little behind her.

Rachel stood and gazed at the picture. It was very beautiful, and she loved beauty in any form. She was quite unconscious that her companion was also standing enjoying every detail of what seemed to him by far the most beautiful picture he had ever seen—Rachel herself, with her hat in her hand, and the gold and red sunset light falling on her head and lighting up her face.

Not a thought of running away crossed her mind now. There had been such an entire absence of anything she ought to run away from. That kindly, quiet manner was most reassuring. She decided that her imagination must have played her freaks about that first interview; there could have been nothing but quiet friendliness.

She turned round after awhile; her friend was looking up the stream, enjoying the view equally with herself.

Rachel put out her hand of her own accord to be helped back, and allowed him to hold it quietly in his till he had found her a seat to his liking. Mr. Carson threw himself down on the grass at Rachel's feet, and opened the books she had brought with her. There was an

amused, and yet a little anxious, expression on his face as he looked up and asked: "Are these your favourite studies?"

Rachel laughed a merry, unconscious laugh, that made him smile in sympathy.

"Nay, indeed they are not," she said. "Was it my conversation which made thee think they would be according to my taste?"

"No," was the answer; "it was because they seemed such an utter contradiction to it that I asked you. I see there is a name here—may I ask whether it is yours?"

"It is my aunt's—Jael Winter; my name is Rachel."

"For such a Rachel one could serve—" began Fred Carson to murmur to himself. But he stopped abruptly, and continued: "Everyone in the village calls you Rachel?"

"Yes, the Friends always use the Christian name."

"Then may I take a friend's privilege—Rachel?" lingering over the name as though he liked it.

"Yea, truly," she answered, her truthful eyes looking unconsciously into his. "When everyone else calls me by it it would seem strange for thee not to do so; I feel almost as though thou mightest be my brother."

The slightest shade of discomposure passed over Fred Carson's face, and he felt ever so little inclined for the moment to disturb her sisterly feeling. But he let it pass till another time, and taking a small book from his pocket, he asked whether she liked poetry.

"Yea, truly I do," she answered. "We have one old book of Longfellow's, which I know by heart nearly. But I have read no other. The Friends do not read much poetry."

Then Mr. Carson read her some of Tennyson's "Enoch Arden," and the time passed away on wings of beauty and music.

The reader felt all he read, and he intended his listener to feel too.

He must have been satisfied as to the latter, for when, after awhile, he looked up, the brown eyes were full of tears, and a drop fell on to the hand that was resting on her knee.

"Rachel," he said, in a low tone, and then he lifted the little hand to his lips, tenderly and respectfully, as though she had indeed been his sister.

"It is time I went home," said Rachel, with a glow on her, not of the sunset this time.

Mr. Carson rose, picked up her books, and almost in silence helped her over the stones, till they reached the end of the glen. Then as he said good-bye, he made her promise to come and hear the end of Enoch Arden, the next evening if it were possible.

And Rachel went the next evening, and many a time after that. Mistress Jael took a second cold, which proved more obstinate than the first, and for full three weeks she was unable to leave the house.

Those were three pleasant weeks for Rachel. All harm in meeting her friend seemed quite done away with by his quiet, unconscious manner; he preserved a happy medium of respect and care, with perhaps just a tinge of authority. Whatever he asked her to do, she did willingly, and he never seemed to anticipate a refusal. Many a beautiful poem he read to her, and generally a tale of love in one form or another, but he never again raised her hand to his lips, or allowed look or word to disturb her; and that is saying very much for Fred Carson's self-control.

Many a time as he watched Rachel's face with its swift beautiful changes he had hard work to keep from betraying the unbrotherly nature of his own feelings. But he did resist, and until the last week Rachel deceived herself into thinking that the mutual pleasure they found in each other's society was simply platonic.

But that last week somewhat opened her eyes.

Mr. Carson was helping her one evening as usual down the glen, when she stumbled against the trunk of a tree which had fallen across the stream, and the next instant he had lifted her up; she was in his arms; a few quick, strong words of endearment passed his lips; then Rachel released herself, said she was not hurt, and they passed on.

But the magical sesame had appeared, and their secret was a secret no longer. Very silently they finished their walk, and still almost in silence they said good-bye.

For the first time Rachel murmured an excuse for not coming the next evening, but Mr. Carson's quietly spoken: "You must, Rachel; promise me you will for this once," was effectual. Rachel gave the promise.

Poor girl! She went home with a veritable chaos of feelings in her heart. Though intense joy was certainly uppermost, there was a slight tinge of annoyance with Mr. Carson for giving her the sight, which in some respects was unwelcome; and then there was repentance towards her aunt Jael and cousin James, together with much anxiety as to what the future would develop.

Then she recollected that Mr. Carson had heard all about Cousin James from her, and a slight doubt haunted her as to the strict honour of his conduct in listening to her secret when he knew the nature of his own feelings. That night and the next day were full of unrest. Her thoughts of the meeting had more of pain than pleasure in them. She resolved to say good-bye, but what the saying of it would cost her she had never realised till now. However, the obstacles to any closer union were too great even to think of. Apart from the sorrow and disappointment which her refusal to marry her cousin would cause, there was another hindrance. Mr. Carson was not a Friend, and she fully believed that no choice of hers that fell on anyone outside their own sect would be for a moment tolerated.

Wearily turning all this over in her mind, she wended her way to the wood at the appointed time.

Mr. Carson was waiting. He shook hands with her, then silently led the way to the spot which would be so doubly dear to her now.

When they got there, they both stood for a moment, still silent, Rachel with her grave eyes resting on the stream; he with his eyes fixed on her face, studying the traces of last night's conflict, and reading the sad determination written about her mouth.

Rachel longed for him to speak—anything would be better than that dreadful silence; if he would not break it, she must.

"Mr. Carson!"

"Rachel!"

"I have come to bid thee good-bye."

And then in spite of all her efforts her lips would quiver.

"Rachel, I will not say good-bye; you know that would be impossible! I ought to have told you before, perhaps, but I thought latterly you could hardly help seeing that I loved you; that you had become the one most precious thing in my life. Did you not know this? Did your own heart not tell you?"

"I thought of thee as of a dear brother," faltered Rachel; "otherwise, I dare not have thought of thee at all. Thou knewest that I was promised to Cousin James, and——"

"And now you intend marrying Cousin James," said Mr. Carson with a tinge of bitterness in his tone. "You think more of Cousin James, whom you have never seen, than you do of me. I am an outsider, a man of the world—not a Friend, and you cannot love a man who is not a Friend. Or is it I myself whom your heart will not make room for? Rachel, speak to me! Is it so?"

Just then, words of her aunt Jael flashed across her mind. "Say nay, before it is too late! Your love will but minister to his vanity."

But the truth of Mr. Carson's words made itself felt. She *knew* he was honest and sincere in it all, and that made it all the harder to speak the inevitable good-bye.

For a long time the conflict between love and duty waged fierce warfare in her heart. Mr. Carson's only reply to all her arguments was that he would not let her go; and there was so much power in the quiet, firm tones of his voice, and such strong determination in his face, mingled with its unutterable love, that Rachel's power of resistance began to fail.

It is always better for a woman when love and duty go together, but in Rachel's case it was particularly so. Love would ever be the strongest influence with her, and now it was not so much a question of right and wrong as of the old love for her aunt and father, and of the new love which seemed to have gained in strength what it had lost in time.

And then there was her will (which was none of the strongest)

in opposition to his, which from being omnipotent with himself was generally all powerful with those around him.

Rachel dropped her colours at last, and went heart and soul over to the enemy.

And it was quite time; she was very weary. Hers was not a nature to stand such warfare long, and the strong, loving protection she found came very gratefully to her. No doubt about its ever being used to crush her ever entered her mind. Of course the little glen became a paradise, and this Adam and Eve rejoiced greatly in its sweetness, and their joy found beautiful expression.

But the sun will not stand still even to listen to so new a tale as this. The shadows deepened about the rocks, and round the great stones, and the evening mist hid the flowers and bracken; a cooler wind began to rustle through the trees. Mr. Carson folded Rachel's shawl about her, and as she turned for home, he said half-sadly:

"Do you know, my darling, I must really say good-bye to-night for a short time. To-morrow, early, I must leave Allerslie for a while, but I need not tell you that I shall not linger the moment I am able to return."

Rachel turned to him. The brightness had vanished from her face and it had grown so white that, before the words passed her lips, Mr. Carson felt obliged to bring some colour back again.

"Oh, Fred, thou must not leave me!"

"Rachel, I would not if it were possible for me to stay. You would not have me neglect my duty?"

"Hast thou not made me neglect mine?"

"No; at least not exactly. A woman's duty is where her heart is; a man must bring his heart to his duty."

"Wherefore must thou go?"

"Can you trust me for the answer till I return?"

"Yea, truly, if I must I can," said Rachel. "But supposing Cousin James comes first—what shall I do? Thou knowest I would not marry him, but my heart fails me when I think of the rest. Thou hast given thy love to a very coward, Fred. I shall need thee just then, oh, so much."

"Rachel," replied Mr. Carson, "I must let you go"— an onlooker would scarcely have judged those were his present intentions— "but, again, will you believe me, and trust me to fulfil my promise, when I say if Cousin James appears he shall not be here before I am?"

"I will trust thee for all," was the answer; and the answer met with the reception it deserved.

But farewell had to be said at last, and Rachel returned home to watch and wait. She had promised Mr. Carson to leave all explanations for him to make to her aunt when he came, and in truth she dared not have made them herself.

No letters were to come; Mistress Jael must have seen them; it was to be all trust.

And such it was for a long time. Many weeks passed, the two months which were to have ended his absence had nearly drawn to a close, and Rachel went about the house with a new light on her face, and such a happy ring in her voice, that Mistress Jael wondered what had come to the child; and even Brother Jabez's solemn face brightened into a smile when she came near.

Sometimes anxious thoughts would force themselves on her mind; thoughts of what might be the sequel to it all, thoughts of the arrival of Cousin James, which was to be just a month after Fred's return. But as a rule the great joy of thinking he would be there swallowed up everything else. She left it with him to make all things straight. It was the consciousness of his power which had drawn her to him in the first instance, and she believed it would stand her in good stead now.

But the brightest anticipations are seldom realised in the way we expect. Two months passed, and the eager watcher at that little garden-gate watched in vain. She had pictured so often what the meeting would be like. Where she should be, and what he would say. Sometimes she thought of it as at the gate there—she would see that brown hat down the road, and hear his quick, firm step get gradually nearer, while she herself would keep behind the hedge.

Sometimes she imagined it all in their own little nook. It would be another sunset time, and he would come upon her suddenly and say "Rachel," and she would answer, "I did not expect thee."

But these were only fancies, passing sweet; he had not come really. Perhaps to-morrow would bring him.

And so she waited on, hoping for each to-morrow; her heart growing sick and faint the while against her will; and what made it a thousand times worse was that Cousin James would soon be here, and though she would never marry him, yet it would be hard to tell all by herself.

Mistress Jael could not understand her niece at all. She had suddenly seemed so much brighter and happier, and now all trace of sunshine seemed to have vanished from her face; she even looked ill. And to be like that just when she should have looked her best!

The older lady turned it all over in her mind, and could only come to one natural conclusion: that Rachel was feeling nervous at being almost bound to marry a man whom she had never seen, and was so soon to meet. She talked to her and told her that though it was the dearest wish of her heart, yet her inclinations would not be forced in any way; she would be left entirely free in the matter.

A tithe of the burden on Rachel's heart was lessened, but still there was Fred Carson's absence. She wondered what had happened to him—so many things were possible. She never doubted once of his truth and faith with her. The days passed on as days will, whether we want them to stay or are weary with their length.

One morning Rachel awoke to the fact that that day was to bring her cousin. She went through her household duties mechanically,

dreading the time to come, fearing she knew not what. Suddenly, towards evening, her fear took the form of flight. She felt the house become unbearable, and quickly as her steps would carry her she hurried down to the glen.

It was not a propitious thing to do, if she had stayed to think—taking refuge from the second lover in the trysting-place of the first. But she didn't, couldn't think just then of anything but escape.

It was another sunset-time; the place was filled with its golden glory. The stone in the middle of the stream on which Rachel had stood that night looked like a fragment of a rainbow.

Rachel stepped on to it, and gazed with full eyes and fuller heart on the well-known scene. She stood there a long time; the light grew less intense; then the shadows came out; the wind grew chilly. A passing shiver roused her. She turned with a sigh that was nearly a sob to go back, when—had she been dreaming so long that she could not awake? Or was it Fred who stood on the bank holding out his hand to help her just as he had done before?

She did not long remain undecided, but placed her hand in his, whether shadow or reality, and in another second was gathered in his arms. When she had a chance of speaking, she said: "Oh, Fred! I thought thou wouldst not come; my heart had grown so heavy waiting for thee!"

"Why, my darling," was the answer with more than the usual accompaniments, "did you doubt me?"

"Nay, truly, never," she replied. "I only doubted the circumstances that might have prevented thee. And now, my aunt—wilt thou tell her? And Cousin James—he will have come!"

"I am going now to Mistress Jael. It is too cold for you to stay here longer, much as I should like to keep you. Cousin James has come. I saw him as I stood a moment at the garden-gate to ask where you had gone."

"Oh, has he come?" exclaimed Rachel, and she made an involuntary movement nearer her lover, as though seeking protection from something.

Mr. Carson was not irresponsive. "What is he like? Like Brother Jabez?"

"No; at least, the likeness is not striking," was the answer, given with a slight smile. "But you know I could not stay to look at him when I knew where you were."

"Thou didst notice, though, that he was little?"

"Not very."

"Oh, well, I think an ugly head on a big man is worse than on a little one; we see it more."

"But I don't think he is exactly what you would call ugly," answered Fred, carefully suppressing a smile this time. "Indeed, I am afraid you may fall in love with him at first sight, more than you did with me."

"I did not fall in love with thee at first sight!" echoed Rachel, trying unsuccessfully to look dignified.

"Yea, truly, and thou didst, thou little puritan. I saw it in thy eyes, in thy sweet deception of thyself afterwards. But I have no right to talk; I was thine entirely from that first evening, and I knew it."

"Then it was very deceitful of thee to do as thou didst, and I doubt whether I should believe thee now."

"Rachel, shall you love Cousin James?"

"Oh! Fred, thou knowest!" was the answer, given with a suspicion of tears.

Fred spent about five minutes in demonstrating the fact that he did know, and then they turned their faces homewards.

There was no sign of Cousin James when they reached the house; only old Miriam met them, and to Rachel's great astonishment expressed no surprise but offered to conduct Mr. Carson to Aunt Jael.

Rachel stayed to hear the sitting-room door open and close, then she ran up to her old seat in the staircase window, and sat looking out watching the lengthening shadows, and one or two pale stars that were beginning to glimmer.

A great longing for the mother's love she had never known filled her heart. If she could only have laid her head on her mother's knee and told her all; told her how great her love was, and how it made all she was doing seem quite right, because it was the greatest influence in her life; far greater to her than the disappointment would be to her aunt and cousin. And then she could have told her mother what the man she loved was like, how true and brave and strong he was, and how he loved her.

Poor little Rachel, she had had no great proof of his goodness, except that she loved and believed in it; but there are worse things to judge by than a pure woman's instinct; and hers was yet fresh and strong as when God gave it her.

The cool night air came in at the open window, rich with the scent of jessamine and honeysuckle, and the breath of many other flowers below, and it seemed as though it would have cooled her hot face, or soothed her troubled spirit if it had been possible. "Mother, mother, if thou wert but with me!" was her cry as she bent her head down low on the window-sill.

Just then a hand was laid on her shoulder. Aunt Jael was by her side—that is, if this woman with glistening eyes and softened mouth could be Aunt Jael.

"Rachel, my child, my own daughter, wilt thou learn to call me mother, if not for my sake, for another's?"

"But," stammered Rachel, after she had risen to her feet and given her own impulsive answer to this unexpected appeal. "But, aunt, do you know ——"

"I know all; more than thou knowest," was the answer, and taking the girl's hand in hers, Mistress Jael led her downstairs into the room she had just left.

Rachel had no time to think; she just held her breath and waited.

They entered the room. Someone was standing in the dusky recess of the window—it had grown too dark to distinguish more than the bare outlines, but those outlines raised a tumult in Rachel's heart that threatened to choke her. Aunt Jael passed her arm around her waist, and said with a thrill of real joy in her stern voice:

"This is thy cousin James, Rachel; this is my boy. I have told him he would never have thy hand without thy heart went with it, and he claims them both! James, take her."

The figure at the window moved quickly towards her, but not before the timely moon, which just then broke through the clouds, had lit up the face and form of Fred Carson.

"Can you forgive me the deception? My mother has done so, and will e'en accept her son though he is not a Friend. Can you forgive me for wanting my wife to come to me of her own free will, because she could not help it?"

"But I did say I would not marry Cousin James," murmured Rachel; "thou wouldst not have me break my word?"

"You promised to marry me, little one, and that will make it straight."

"Fred," said Rachel, after awhile, "if I could have looked into the waters of my life that day, I should have seen a golden nugget thrown into them, so bright and beautiful that it seemed to cast its tint on all around."

"And if I read your allegory aright," said Fred, "the golden nugget never looked so bright and pure until the waters of your life washed over it. But what didst thou see in the pool that day? Something that cast a very warm reflection, for I watched thee."

"I think thou knowest," was the answer.

FAIR NORMANDY.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.

WE left Dreux full of thought of our strange adventure. The time had passed with inconceivable rapidity. We had enjoyed nothing so much in Normandy. H. C. declared that never had anything made so profound an impression upon him. The last words of our mysterious guide—mysterious no longer—rang in our ear. Her confidence had not extended to H. C., and our conversation, altogether carried on in French, had been a sealed book to him; but he had felt the strange influence, and knew that a singular disclosure had been made. For the time he abstained from questioning; but I knew before long I should have to choose between confession and the tortures of the rack.

The night was dark; but as we went onward, the heavy atmosphere seemed to clear, and the stars came out large and brilliant. As we approached Chartres, some of its striking features might be traced. The cathedral spires pointing upwards were clearly outlined against the background of the night sky. Perched on a steep hill above the town, they seemed to reach the heavens.

The train steamed into the station. The night had turned chilly, and there was a suspicion of frost in the air. H. C. counted his nine and twenty brown paper packages twice over, and then walked off with the air of a man of possessions. I was condescendingly permitted to carry a few of the less valuable art-treasures: the pottery portion of the collection, whilst he took charge of the finer porcelain. Not having all his affection for old china, he declared that my carelessness in handling the precious objects amounted to barbarism and irreverence. His own love for these things amounts to china worship. The more antediluvian their appearance, and the more grotesque, the greater his rapture. I have seen him go down on his knees in silent contemplation of a Chinese monster, all eyes and mouth and dragon's teeth and impossible contortions; he has become fairly charmed and mesmerised; his head has nodded like a Chinese mandarin; and a glow and a grin have suffused his countenance until you could have declared that the dragon's grin and contortions were infectious, and that an extremely interesting conversation was going on between the two. It would form, in fact, a sort of tableau vivant, and Beauty and the Beast was its interpretation.

The omnibus of the Hôtel du Grand Monarque was waiting at the station. The conductor seeing H. C. staggering along under his burdens (a sort of Study in Brown) hastened to his assistance. Fairly landed within, the conductor having obtained the registered luggage

by means of the ticket, we rattled off. History repeats itself, especially in the matter of hotel omnibuses tearing through the streets of these old French towns.

But at a first glance it was evident that Chartres was very different from Evreux. The streets seemed very tortuous, though quite as sleepy and deserted. Yet it was difficult to judge, for we had no sooner left the station than we arrived at the inn, which was well situated in a large, open, irregular square. Our short omnibus journey, moreover, had been less interesting. We had had it to ourselves. No freighted lady had entered, to be deposited half way in the arms of lovely and enchanting syrens. No door had closed upon a domestic tableau from which we felt ourselves painfully excluded.

The Hôtel du Grand Monarque was somewhat primitive looking. There was a want of style about it that was very refreshing. Here evidently dwelt no glass of fashion or mould of form. We should not have to dress for dinner.

Of course there was the usual porte cochère, and from its hospitably wide gates issued the landlord, who immediately addressed us in English. Is this instant recognition to be taken as a compliment? Somehow we always feel rather taken down. The tone seems to imply that being English we are inferior beings, and cannot be conversant even with the elegances of the French language.

Our host, however, was amiable (when are French hosts otherwise?), and assured us that we were welcome, and that all he possessed was at our disposal. This sounded so very Spanish that we wondered whether he had ever lived under the shadow of the mosques and minarets of some fair City of the South.

The Grand Monarque proved a quiet French country inn, of the good old sort. Fashion and ceremony were dispensed with. Carpets were at a premium, but the floors were white and well kept. It was a very different inn from that at Evreux; less straggling and rambling; and we searched for the kitchen and the chef in vain. These could only be approached through monsieur's office and madame's sanctum; and as yet we did not feel ourselves sufficiently privileged to beard the lions in their den. Once become "enfants de la maison" with these good people, and they find you charming, and you find them charming; nothing you do is a liberty, and no amount of invasion is an intrusion. You may command, and obedience follows as certainly as the sunshine draws the shower.

Our room upstairs had a balcony, and we threw wide the windows. Before us in the darkness stood the Place, large and straggling. Lights gleamed from some of the houses; but most of them were dark and closed, as if the inmates had retired for the night. From this point we caught no sign of the cathedral; no traces of antiquity were visible; Chartres really seemed somewhat tame and commonplace; but we would not judge too hastily. Evreux had disclosed unsuspected charms: Chartres might do the same.

We went down to the salle-à-manger—a very different room from that at Evreux. It was small and square, with a sanded floor, brilliantly lighted with gas, and warmed to a tropical heat. At a table in the corner sat a French lady and a little girl, fellow-travellers from Dreux; in the same train, but not the same compartment. They had not accompanied us in the omnibus, so must have walked from the station. From their conversation we discovered that they were aunt and niece: and the niece was a troublesome and detestable little monkey. She was ugly too, which is unpardonable. Some children are evidently born to be penances for the sins of those with whom they come into contact; but the infliction is out of all proportion with the sin. In the present instance both were eating soup, evidently having a race as to which could dispose of it most quickly and with the greatest sound. Fortunately it was soon over, and our agony was short-lived.

We noticed that a private code of signals existed between the aunt and niece: a sort of domestic semaphore. If anything attracted the intelligent child's observation: if, for instance, we were guilty of the eccentricity of taking bread or drinking wine: she immediately kicked the aunt under the table; and as soon as the aunt had gathered the niece's meaning, she signified the same by putting on an evil leer. In short, they were curious people, and we were glad when they departed.

At the opposite side of the room, at a large table, sat ten or a dozen Frenchmen, evidently forming a small and select coterie, having arrived at that stage of the repast when coffee is handed round. They were full of conviviality, as befitted the hour and the occasion. What the latter was we wondered. We could not quite make them out either. They were evidently at home; as evidently they did not live at the inn. They were not commercial travellers: that was certain. One moment we thought them young doctors; but the small town of Chartres could scarcely give work for a dozen practitioners, however leisurely they might take their own life—and that of their patients; and even if it did, they would scarcely find themselves assembled at the Grand Monarque, unless it was a more ceremonious event than their present undress indicated. Next we put them down as barristers, until we remembered that Chartres was not an assize town, and that a congregation of learned gentlemen would scarcely find an occasion for their presence in the old ecclesiastical city.

The landlady solved the mystery when they had all taken their departure, and the aunt and niece had followed in their wake—the latter turning round and making a face at us as she vanished through the door—leaving us in possession of the room. They were masters at the Lycée, said our hostess; learned professors of the most learned Academy of Chartres. They dined there regularly en pension all the year round; and she would rather lose by them than not have them; for they enlivened the place, and conferred dignity upon it by

their attendance. The dignity must have been a very "reflected light," we thought, for their behaviour at table, though very entertaining, had certainly had nothing of the staid or the severe about it: whilst some of them were dressed almost in the proverbial tatters that learned professors delight in.

Here we were not attended to by electrified waiters, as at Evreux, but the fair hostess herself supplied our necessities; dividing her labours with a fossil, who might have been electrified in his younger

CHARTRES.

days, but was now little better than a galvanised mummy. He was, nevertheless, very civil and obliging, and we became very good friends. The landlady did credit to her larder. She was large and stout, and walked about with that comfortable vibration which is so suggestive of good temper and a jelly about to fall to ruins. But like many stout people, she moved easily and her footstep was inaudible. She went about like a ghost, though in her case the position was reversed and she was very distinctly the substance of a shadow.

In due time we also reached the coffee period of the repast, and

left the dining-room. The lights were extinguished and it fell into darkness and repose. We went out into the night. The air was clear and frosty; the stars were cold and brilliant. As at Evreux, so here economy seemed to reign, and the streets were in comparative gloom. Very few gas-lights shed abroad their cheerful rays, which always help to make darkness visible, if they do nothing more. We have not yet fallen upon the halcyon days of universal electric lighting. When we do, we shall look back upon these primitive days of unwholesome and unsteady gas, as we now look back in imagination upon the days when rushlights were the fashion, and our grandmothers prided themselves upon the art of snuffing candles. Here, however, darkness had it all its own way. The inhabitants of Chartres are peaceable and garrotters are unknown. The cats alone hold revelry, and duets and choruses make night hideous. From a few houses there streamed forth the light of a modest candle, faint and glimmering, as if in apology for neglecting the curfew; and here and there an industrious and enterprising shopkeeper had not yet put up his shutters.

One of these happened to be a confectioner's, and H. C. immediately turned in and invested largely in chocolate. Chocolate and china are, in fact, his two pet weaknesses, and he is quite as unable to resist the one as the other. Unfortunately china is less easily disposed of than chocolate, though the latter produces more mischief. I have known him return to England with a complexion the colour of one of his own majolica plates, the effect of chocolate and disturbed digestion: and once he was obliged to have recourse to the waters of Harrogate before his natural complexion returned to him. This, as a rule, is a combination of the lily and the rose: the cabbage rose, not the Maréchal Neil.

But it did us good service in this instance, for the confectioner directed us to the cathedral, which we might otherwise have had some difficulty in finding. The streets were absolutely deserted.

We mounted a steep hill, and before long turned into a square and found ourselves in front of the building we had so often and so long desired to see. It was the fulfilment of one of our dreams.

As yet only a partial fulfilment, for in the darkness all details were lost. We could only trace the broad outlines of the cathedral, but they were sufficient to show us its massiveness and magnificence. Standing on a height, yet somewhat too surrounded by houses, it looked strangely silent and solemn under the quiet night sky. There was not a sound in the air; not a light gleamed from any window; nothing disturbed a repose that might have been that of the ages. As far as we could see the west front was plain and unadorned, but the spires towered above, and in the gloom seemed to meet the sky and hold commune with the stars.

As we looked a bird flew out from one of the towers, and we wondered what had broken its rest in all this solemn stillness. It darted over the body of the cathedral, eastward, as though, tired of

the darkness and gloom, it would wander off to meet the far-off dawn "which paints the eastern skies." Or perhaps it had been amongst the tombs, holding converse with the dead, and was hieing with a message to some distant star. For who knows all that is passing around us; all the mysteries of the unseen and spiritual world; the silent work that may be going on, the unspoken messages that may be carried to and fro, sealing our fate or controlling our destinies? We can discern nothing and we know nothing; our eyes are withheld; we are of those who, this side the veil, see through a glass darkly.

There were a few trees within high walls, and every now and then as we passed without they waved and murmured, and the cold still air seemed full of mysterious whispers. The houses were dwarfed by the cathedral; the whole aspect of the surroundings was that of an old-fashioned close. We were high above the town; and if the air blew keen and cold, it was no wonder. We shivered as we stood before the great south doorway, and tried to make out something of its richness and grandeur. It is more beautiful than many west fronts, and more than makes up for the severity of its own, but to-night we could only gain a faint impression of what it might be by daylight.

It was growing late and we left the cathedral to its solemn, death-like repose, and wandered back into the town. We went down the narrow thoroughfare, all dark and wrapped in the mystery of night, and presently found ourselves in the old square, and in front of the Grand Monarque.

Everyone now seemed to have obeyed the curfew summons, and darkness reigned. The great doorway was closed, and our appeal for admission was answered by the host himself, who seemed to be keeping vigil over his account books in his bureau. Let us hope the balance between debit and credit was—as it deserved to be—very much in his favour. It is said that people in this world seldom meet their deserts: the saying has almost become a proverb: but is it so? It is difficult to believe that he who starts in life on the straight road and takes for his motto the old pilot's advice "Fear not, but trust in Providence," will at the end of many days find his account against him.

To-night, as we could see very little of the old town, and as it was growing late, we wisely retired. Our host himself escorted us to our room, carrying the light, and solicitous for our comfort. It was a long room, somewhat barely furnished, after the manner of so many of the French hotels. But it is a fault on the right side: too much luxury is enervating. There was, of course, the usual door communicating with the next room, but to-night we had no neighbours, hysterical or otherwise.

The next morning rose fair and bright. The place was flooded with sunshine. It was an influence not to be resisted, and we went down with the high spirits of those who carry easy consciences.

The breakfast-room was in possession of the aunt and niece, at the very same little table in the very same corner. We sat as far as possible from them, and for once the charms of the fair sex failed to make any impression upon H. C.

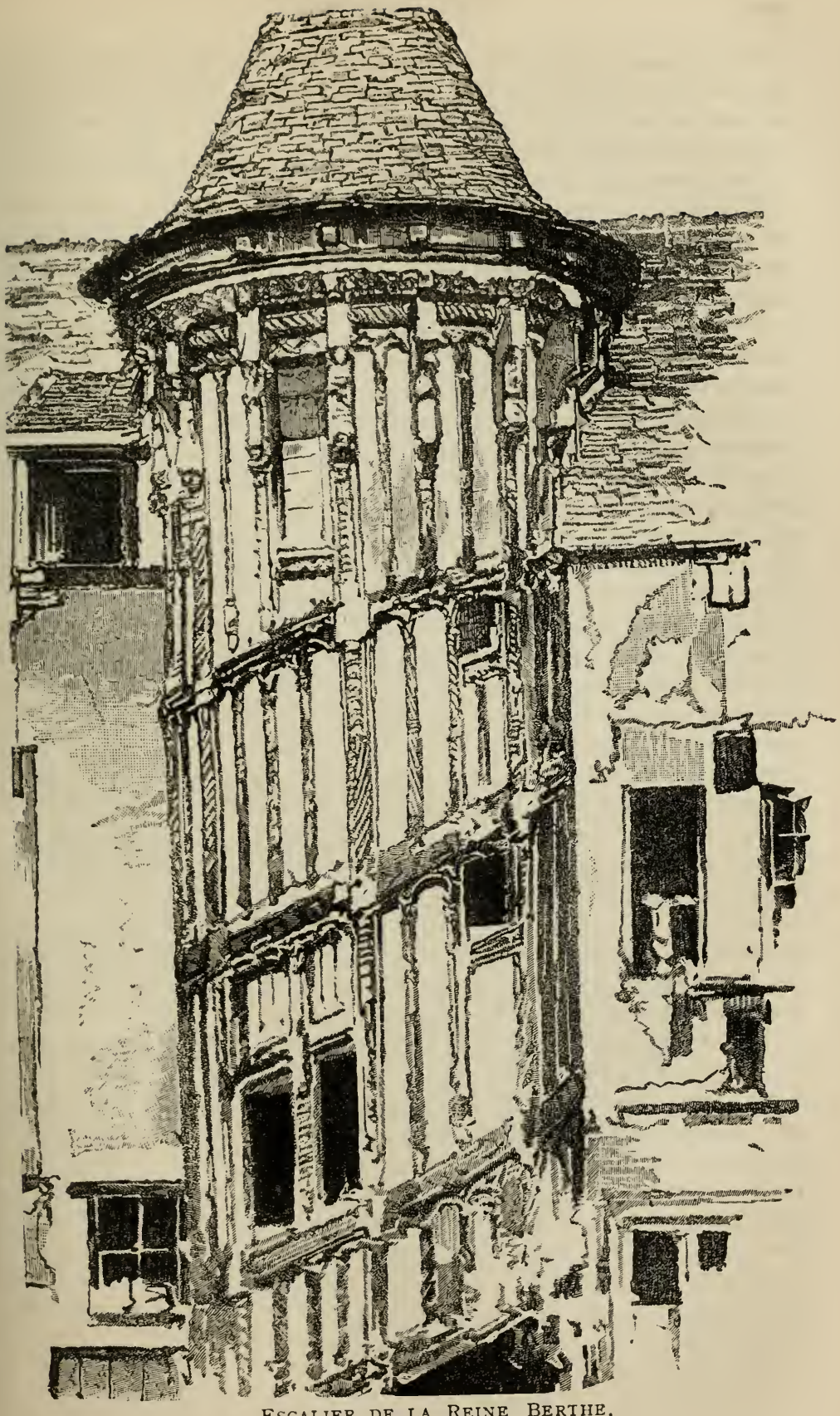
Our galvanised mummy waited upon us, beginning the ceremony with a sort of elastic grin, which made his face look like india-rubber, and was his way of saying good-morning; but as he brought us the most delicious hot rolls and excellently brewed tea, we forgave him any small eccentricities in which he indulged. He was evidently a privileged individual: an appendage of the inn, that would have to be taken over with other fixtures if ever the lease changed hands: and for such people, no matter what their peculiarities—short of a mania for arson or murder—one should have a great respect. Water will find its own level, and a many years' servitor must have great virtues: unless, indeed, the virtues are transcendently on the other side. We all know John's answer to his master upon receiving warning: an answer now recorded in history. "Sir," replied the faithful John, "if you don't know when you've a good servant, I know when I've a good master, and I refuse to leave." The very same thing happened about two years ago to the present writer; but in this instance the parallel was brought about not by the virtues of the master (which are, no doubt, conspicuous) but by the obstinacy of the servant, who, also, as in the above case, gained the day. "J'y suis, j'y reste," said Dumas, though I think he was only echoing the famous saying of a yet more famous man: a better rendering of the old assertion that Possession is nine points of the law.

It was a warm, sunny morning, more like an August than an October day. The sky was blue and cloudless, and we could scarcely realise that last night had been so cold and frosty. We passed through the narrow, tortuous streets of Chartres, and, gradually ascending, soon found ourselves on the summit of the hill, facing the cathedral. It was the reverse to Evreux, and daylight added to its effect.

It has been said that if you took the towers of Chartres, the nave of Amiens, and the portal of Rheims, you would have the finest cathedral in the world. Those who have seen all three cathedrals will readily believe that such a grouping of architecture could scarcely be rivalled.

Yet as regards Chartres, magnificent as are its bell-towers and spires, so beautiful is the whole building that it seems almost impossible to give the preference to one portion over another. If it has a fault, it is that its west front is too plain and severe, and that its ornamentation borders on the grotesque; yet this is more than made up by the richness, the beauty and size of the south doorway, with its pointed gothic arch surmounted by its magnificent rose-window, and the flight of steps leading into the interior. The north doorway is also wonderfully beautiful.

As we stood before the west front, its very severity seemed to add



ESCALIER DE LA REINE BERTHE.

to the grandeur of the unequal towers and the elegance of the spires. They have wonderfully stood the test of time. There were no signs of age about them; no weather-beaten traces. The "Clocher Vieux," more than seven hundred years old, might have been built in the present day.

The whole cathedral is one of the most substantial as well as one of the most beautiful in the world. Its buttresses look as if they would stand the test, not of centuries, but of ages a thousand times multiplied.

Perhaps this new, almost modern aspect of the exterior is at first a little disappointing, for it has almost a look of restoration. All the beauty of age is wanting: the discoloured walls, the lights and shades which mark the lapse of time almost as surely as a dial records the passing moments; the rounded corners and crumbling niches and imperfect images. These marks add so much to the effect of an ancient building; appealing to the imagination, throwing over all an air of beauty and refinement that nothing else will give. They form the poetry and romance of architecture, and affect the mind with a certain sadness that possibly is "akin to pain."

The exterior of Chartres has none of all this. It is a giant of strength, and its youth seems everlasting. Some of its images, it is true, are chipped and broken; others have altogether disappeared; but the sharp edges have none of the crumbling of fine lace-work, so characteristic, for instance, of Rouen. Here, a mason might have gone round and chiselled away what is now imperfect; and it might all have been done within a lifetime.

But Chartres has been occasionally restored; and like everything else, it was more beautiful before its restoration than now. Nothing that is new equals the work of the Dark Ages.

How is this? The difference is not the effect of time alone; the present day cannot achieve the greatness of the past; hands have lost their cunning; genius is not hereditary, and the giant capacities for great efforts have not been handed down to posterity.

The "Clocher Vieux" of Chartres is more than seven hundred years old, as we have said; yet, as M. Viollet-le-Duc remarks in his interesting work: "On n'y voit pas une lézarde, pas une échancrure, quoi qu'il ait été colliné intérieurement par deux terribles incendies." And of the cathedral he adds: "Il n'y a pas une seule des pierres de la cathédrale qui ne soit saine, solide, adhérente aux autres, comme si elle avait été posée hier: elles ont essuyé six à sept cents hivers comme un jour: le temps s'est incliné devant elles, et a passé outre."

All this is literally true; and as we gaze upon Chartres, we feel that almost it might be a modern building in everything except its magnificence and grandeur, the splendour of its outlines, the glory of its perfection.

In position, it could not be better placed. It stands upon the summit of a steep hill, rising above the town, which surrounds it on

all sides and reaches to its very walls. The little close, of which it is the centre, has no special feature of quaintness or originality. But just without it you look down upon slopes covered with houses, here and there made green and picturesque by waving trees and creeper-covered walls, and windows bright with autumn flowers. The Eure runs at the bottom, surrounding the town as it were with a moat, adding beauty and picturesqueness to the scene; washing the very foundations of the Porte Guillaume, the only remaining gate of the seven that once gave entrance to Chartres.

Beyond all this stretch, far as the eye can reach, the wide and fertile plains of La Beauce, a province now absorbed in the Department of the Eure et Loir, whose fertility and careful cultivation make the neighbourhood one of the granaries of France. Hence, to this day, Chartres is famous for its corn market, which is held here every Saturday; and is the only time when the town shows signs of bustle and animation.

Far and near the lofty steeples of Chartres are conspicuous, full of grace and beauty. The north spire is considered the most perfect example of its kind known in France, perhaps in the world. For centuries they have been landmarks. But they have gone through vicissitudes, have passed through wreck and ruin, through "flood and flame." A great deal of wood was first employed in their construction, and they have often been struck by lightning. In every storm they were the most exposed, the most likely to fall victims to the "fire from heaven."

The cathedral was founded in the third century on the site, says tradition, of a Druid sanctuary, where the Druids had worshipped the Virgin, by prophetic inspiration. Very soon after that early epoch Chartres became the scene of ever-increasing pilgrimages: was, indeed, almost if not quite the first church to which pilgrimages were made; and the "black Virgin" became celebrated throughout France and the whole civilized Roman Catholic world. It was in 1194 that the building became a prey to the flames, and nothing escaped excepting the crypt, the west front, and its towers.

In 1260 the cathedral was rebuilt of stone, and the people declared that henceforth until the day of judgment it had nothing to dread from fire, but would, on the contrary, save from everlasting fire the numerous Christians who had contributed to its restoration. Yet Chartres has since suffered terribly from this very cause. Four cathedrals were burnt before 1194; and the new one, of which the people spoke so confidently, consecrated sixty-four years after in the presence of St. Louis and all his family, has been eight times in flames. The last time was in 1836, when fortunately only the roof suffered.

The Chartrains considered these fires as attacks made by the devil, envious of the church raised to the Virgin. The great fire of 1194 they attributed to demons, whom they saw flying through the air in the form of crows, carrying in their mouths burning coals which

they dropped on to the roof. In this fire everything was destroyed except the crypt and the two towers.

The building of churches in those days was a work of labour and self-denial. The architects worked almost as hard as the men, and earned little more. Jehan de Texies, the architect of the upper part of the "Clocher Neuf," built in 1507, received seven sous a day, the workmen five. The date of the Vieux Clocher, 1194, is found on a window arch near the summit, but the architect is unknown.

The foundations of the church were laid in 1115, and Haymond, Abbé of St. Pierre-sur-Dives, describes how the work went on in his book, "The Miracles of the Blessed Virgin."

He records that men, proud of their birth and riches, accustomed to a luxurious life of self-indulgence, harnessed themselves to the shafts of a cart, and conveyed up the hill stones, lime, wood, and every material needed for the building of the sacred edifice. Sometimes a thousand persons, men and women, were harnessed to the same cart, so heavy was the load to be dragged up. In spite of the work and the number of people, a profound silence reigned; not a whisper was heard. If they stopped on the road and spoke, it was only of their sins, which they confessed with tears and prayers. The priests made them promise to subdue all hatred and forgive all debts. Anyone sufficiently hardened to be unwilling to forgive his enemies and refuse to submit to these exhortations, was at once unharnessed from the cart and driven out of the holy band of workers.

The quarries from which the stone was brought were at Berchères-l'Evêque, eight kilometres from Chartres, and these bands of devotees had to drag their carts over bad roads and up the steep hill on which Nôtre Dame is built. Some of the blocks used are not less than three metres long by one metre in depth. The custom of thus banding together commenced at Chartres, and soon spread throughout France.

The cathedral is specially dedicated to the Virgin. There is a tradition to the effect that in the life of our Lord a church existed on the site of the cathedral in honour of His Mother, and that she visited it after His death. From the earliest days the Chartrains have refused to permit anyone to be buried in its precincts.

The fire of 1194 spared little beyond the west front, which, therefore, remained the most ancient part of the building. In spite of its severity it has much that is curious and remarkable. It possesses a great central doorway and two side doorways above which rise the matchless towers and steeples. The three doorways are ornamented by a profusion of statuettes, to the number of seven hundred, it has been said; some are injured, some lost by time; and these are surmounted by three gothic windows, filled with magnificent stained glass of the twelfth century. Above them is a rose-window of beautiful and delicate tracery of the thirteenth century.

The central doorway is called the Porte Royale, perhaps because it is supported by statues of royal saints; perhaps because Henry IV.

CHARTRES.

passed through it when he was crowned in Chartres Cathedral. These royal saints are cadaverous-looking and quaintly draped ; curious but not beautiful; suggestive of the Byzantine sculpture of the twelfth century. High up above the doorway is an image of Christ in an oval, with the symbols of the four evangelists as designated in the vision of Ezekiel. Below these are the fourteen prophets, and in the upper arches the twenty-four elders of the apocalypse. The sculptures of the right hand portal represent passages in the life of the Virgin ; in that of the left, Christ, accompanied by angels, surrounded by the signs of the Zodiac. It is all somewhat rude art.

This west front is nearly all that remains of the twelfth century.

The north and south doorways are finer and more beautiful, and of a far higher style of art. They are both of the thirteenth century, and may fairly be said to astonish by the grandeur of their conception, their richness of ornamentation, the variety and perfection of their sculptures. Those of the north portal represent scenes from the life of the Virgin, those on the south, the Last Judgment. It would be difficult to exceed them in beauty.

Above each porch is a rose-window, enriched by statues. Flanking both north and south doorways are unfinished towers, and where the apse meets the choir rise two more towers equally unfinished. The central unfinished tower makes one more. Thus Chartres was originally intended to have nine towers and spires. The side windows of nave and choir are of a somewhat singular but striking design ; each is surmounted by a small rose-window of great beauty. These are separated by two arched buttresses, unique of their kind ; two enormous quarter-circles, joined by small columned arches, and thus forming, as it were, gigantic fragments of wheels. The effect is somewhat heavy, but original.

But it was perhaps the interior which struck most upon our senses with awe ; commanding at once our reverence and highest admiration. Passing from the garish day into the soft, subdued, exquisite tones thrown by the matchless windows, was indeed like entering into a new world : a world where everything was grand and magnificent, appealed to one's highest emotions, all one's sense of the sublime and the religious, all one was capable of appreciating of the refined and beautiful. Here eternal calm seemed to reign.

The interior is of vast extent, yet so beautifully proportioned that at first its great size is perhaps not realised. It is 428 feet long, 105 feet wide across the nave, 150 feet across the transepts, and 120 feet high. Its architecture is of the early gothic school, and very perfect. Above the arches of the nave runs a low triforium gallery, surmounted by a lofty clerestory. The choir and apse are surrounded by a double ambulatory, the latter adjoined by seven chapels. In the centre of the nave is a labyrinth of intertwined circles, in black and grey marble. It is called la lieue ; is 30 feet in diameter, and its path is 970 feet long. Its windings had to be followed on hands and

knees by pilgrims and penitents, and a certain number of prayers said at certain stations : the whole ceremony taking an hour to reach the end of the path. The stations represented beads on the rosary. The Chartrains declare that the statues of the twelve apostles in gold lie buried beneath it. The whole pavement of the nave slopes from the entrance of the choir to the west doorway to a degree of eighty centimetres. This was done to make it easier to clean the church after the visits of the pilgrims, who insisted in sleeping in crowds within the sacred walls.

To stand with your back to the west doorway, looking the whole length eastward, is to gaze upon a vision which can have few parallels.

It is a forest of aisles and arches and vaulted roofs. Over all is a rich, subdued light : the dim religious light that is supposed to conduce to devotion, and most certainly suggests repose. In fact, majesty and repose seem to be the key-notes of the building.

The nave is the longest in France. The effect on first entering is so overwhelming and impressive, that Napoleon the First on seeing it, is said to have exclaimed, "Un athée doit se trouver mal ici!" On the other hand, Macaulay declared, "The cathedral, which was my chief object at Chartres, rather disappointed me—it wants vastness." An inconceivable opinion. Whatever may be thought of the exterior, it is impossible to imagine anything more grand and sublime and full of harmony than this interior of Chartres.

The windows, one hundred and thirty in number, are all filled with stained glass, and some of it is matchless. The more we gazed, the more we marvelled and wondered; we had never seen such tone and colour, such richness and brilliancy combined with an exquisite velvety softness. Most of these windows date from the thirteenth century, but many have had to be restored, thereby losing some of their beauty. But the windows are by no means of equal merit. The three west windows are of the twelfth century, and one of them contains a Tree of Jesse. Almost the whole of sacred history can be read on the walls and windows, for they date back to an age when learning was not universal, and instruction was often gained by sight, symbol and observation. Many of the windows illustrate subjects from the Bible, and legends of the saints, who form so important a part in the Roman Catholic religion. Some of the lower compartments represent trades, and were probably given by the different guilds or corporations which they symbolise.

The choir has double aisles, and a semicircular east end. It is separated from the aisles by a screen ornamented by wonderful gothic sculptures in white marble, of the most minute and elaborate description; representing passages in the life of Christ and of the Virgin. It is in forty-five compartments of the finest tracery work, some of which has been compared to "point lace in stone." These sculptures were begun in the year 1514 and continued to the middle of the seventeenth century.

Many of the passages in the life of the Virgin are imaginary. One of them represents her death, which took place at her abode on the slopes of Mount Sinai. There, according to tradition and the sculptures, when her last hour came, all the disciples in various parts of the earth were borne on clouds. She is represented lying on her bed, having made her will, in which she commanded St. John to give two of her garments to two maidens present, who had been long with her. One of these garments the Chartrains believe is still in their possession, and they regard it as their greatest treasure and most precious relic.

This relic is called the *Sacra Camisia*, or La Tunique Intérieure, and was given to the church by Charles le Chauve in 876. It is composed of two pieces of white silk, wrapped in a piece of stuff yet finer and more transparent, supposed to have been a veil worn by the Empress Irene and given by her to Charlemagne.

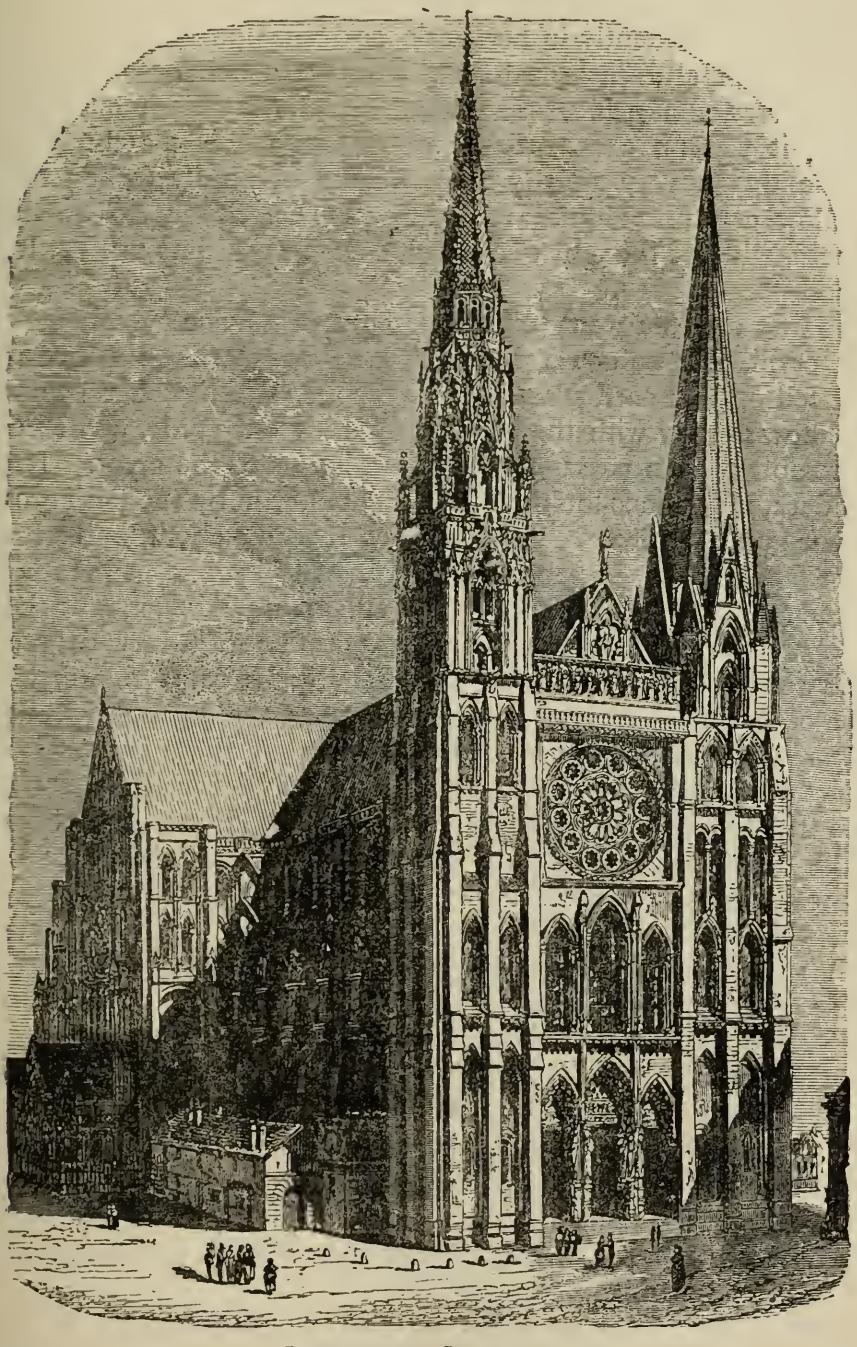
The cathedral partly owed its prestige as a rallying point for pilgrims because it was the earliest church in France dedicated to the Virgin. But it was also in part owing to the presence of the black image of the Virgin: a wonderful image that was supposed to work miracles, and dated from the time (also supposition) when the place was the centre of Druidical worship, as described by Cæsar. The image was kept in the crypt, and was unfortunately burnt, when the crypt was sacked in 1793: unfortunately, for it would have been interesting to see any work of so much antiquity.

There is still a black image of the Virgin said to date back to the twelfth century in the church. This is the object of much superstitious worship. It is gorgeously apparelled; lights are for ever burning near it; it is surrounded by relics, gifts presented by the devoted. It is also supposed to work miracles, and to be efficacious in intercession. It always has worshippers about it; twos and threes, and sometimes crowds. In spite of the candles, the image is somewhat in gloom—but then it is itself black. A railing surrounds it, and a sort of canopy, so that it forms a chapel: the "Chapel of the Virgin," as it is called.

The gates are always open, and those who wish to worship go within the railings; some just within, others approaching quite close to the altar. Their prayer over, they go up and kiss the foot or the dress of the black image. Some kissed it once, we noticed, some twice. We saw strong men, countrymen evidently, with their wives, place their market baskets outside the railings, enter, say a short prayer, kiss the image and come out again; looking the while very conscious and sheepish, as if either they were going through the ordeal against their will and to please their spouses; or as a penance for some particular sin, or a petition for some special favour. At any rate, they seemed supremely clumsy and uncomfortable and out of place.

The image is called La Vierge du Pilier. The chapel is sumptuously decorated. On the 8th of September a grand ceremony

takes place. It is the Festival of the Nativity of the Virgin and of the Dedication of the Cathedral, and children are brought in crowds from all the country round to be blessed by the priest. The chapel is



CATHEDRAL, CHARTRES.

specially decorated for the occasion, and is resplendent with lights and jewels. Probably a more magnificent robe is placed upon the image; the perfume of incense fills the air.

We wished to see the crypt, which is said to be the largest in France, and went to the sacristan, who dwells outside in the south-east corner of the church. He was not at home, but his better half was equal to the occasion. She was of great size and weight and amiability —these virtues generally go hand-in-hand—and she talked much. Her heart was evidently in her work, and she looked upon her visits into the crypt and cathedral as pilgrimages : penances for her sins. This was very comforting, for as she was naturally recompensed for her trouble, it was an excellent way of making the best of both worlds. But she was a very worthy woman ; full of kindly feeling towards her fellow creatures : quite ready to put herself out to do them a kindness, without thought of reward. The world has not yet lost all its good people.

The first time we went to her a children's service was being held in the crypt, and we could not go down. It is held only once a year, and it fell on this particular day. We went again at her own time, and she was ready with the keys. Following our guide, we descended into a subterranean passage which soon led us to the crypt. It was a long, dark, mysterious-looking vault, lighted only by the flaring candle that our guide carried. This cast weird shadows about, and we could almost fancy the place peopled with ghosts of bygone penitential worshippers, and priests concealed in confessional boxes, and cowled monks and hooded nuns ; a long procession of every degree and kind, who must all in turn have visited this crypt to worship the image of the Black Virgin, before the days of the great Revolution.

There was an altar immediately on our left as we entered, and, if I remember rightly, a copy of the desecrated image, in the place where the original once stood : but of this I am not absolutely certain. La Vierge du Pilier in the chapel above may have had a great effect upon me, and I may unconsciously have multiplied her existence.

The crypt was in itself very effective. It was very long ; the ceiling was low ; the darkness, lighted only by the faint torch or candle, was telling and mysterious. From the further end the altar lighted up would have looked singularly picturesque, and we wished we could have commanded an illumination.

"Is it not possible ?" we asked our guide.

"Monsieur !" she objected, in a rich, round voice, "that can only be done for mass, and by order of the priests. It is not a sort of fire-works exhibition, you understand," she added, with a smile.

"But it would be so effective."

"True. It is always effective, and more so when the altar is lighted up. To watch it from the far end of the crypt, with the priest and the boys going through the service—well, you might fancy you were looking at a celestial vision."

"The place seems full of ghosts," we remarked.

"I never come down but I feel the same," she returned, rather to

our surprise. "I feel surrounded by a whole army of ghosts; they seem to pass through the walls, to occupy every chair"—pointing to the rows of chairs on either side that extended some way down the vault. "I believe there *are* ghosts," she added in a loud whisper, that echoed down the long corridor. "But I am not frightened of them. I shall be a ghost myself some day; and why should we dread what we ourselves must become in turn?"

This was philosophy of a high order. But whatever our guide might become in the land of shadows, she was by no means a ghost now, and her shadow was very substantial. All our shadows looked gloomy and aggressive as they flitted down the pavement and over the frescoed walls—curious frescoes of a far-off time.

We were almost glad to return to daylight, and the bright sky and sunshine and wholesome influences. Our guide accompanied us into the cathedral, for we wanted to get into the Chapel of St. Piat, which is behind the high altar, and is kept locked.

More wonderful than ever, after the dark, narrow, confined crypt, looked this vast enclosure, this glorious assemblage of pillars and aisles and vaulted roof and matchless windows, which seemed to fill the space with celestial beams; with colours more gorgeous than tropical flowers, more delicate than the bloom of fruit, more glowing than an eastern dawn.

Our guide swiftly moved down the aisle, and passing round the famous screen, took a key from the wall, and inserted it in the rude door that admitted one into the Chapel of St. Piat. After a little trouble with the lock, the door swung back on its hinges, and we entered.

It is a small chapel, distinct from the cathedral, containing very little that is interesting beyond the stained glass windows. It is used for catechising the children; and at certain times and seasons mass is celebrated. St. Piat is the Patron Saint of the weather, and people come here in the time of harvest to pray for sunshine.

"But they don't always get it," our guide quaintly added, with what sounded very much like a touch of dry humour.

"Why not?" we asked.

"Dame! I don't know. Perhaps they don't deserve it, and he is angry. Or perhaps he is not listening. There may be many reasons. I am not there, so I cannot tell you. Have you seen the Black Virgin?" she asked, as we left the chapel and went back into the church.

"Yes," we answered. "It is a very curious image."

"She is very beautiful," returned our guide. "But whilst they were about it, I wish they had made her white instead of black. Poor thing! how she was insulted at the Revolution of '39. Imagine! a wicked workman put her on the bonnet-rouge, the symbol of their lawless work. But it saved her from destruction. The wretches were so pleased at the effect that they left her there."

"But the other was burnt—and the other was the greater, was it not?"

"Ah, ciel!" returned the good woman, with round eyes of horror. "Only to think of it! Chopped in pieces and burnt in front of the Porte Royale. And fire did not come down from heaven and burn those wicked heathens. But no doubt a worse fate was reserved for them—that is some consolation."

As she was about to leave us, H. C. slipped a substantial reward into her hand. She looked at it attentively.

"There is no nation like the English," she remarked, with a quaint intonation. "I think they are all milords. A Frenchman would give me five sous, and think that too much. But now," she added, "some of this I have to give to the church, and some I may keep for myself. You have to decide. How much shall I keep, and how much give to the church?"

"Give five sous to the church, and keep the rest," H. C. replied promptly, making me interpreter.

"You are sure you don't mean the other way?" she asked honestly—and a little anxiously.

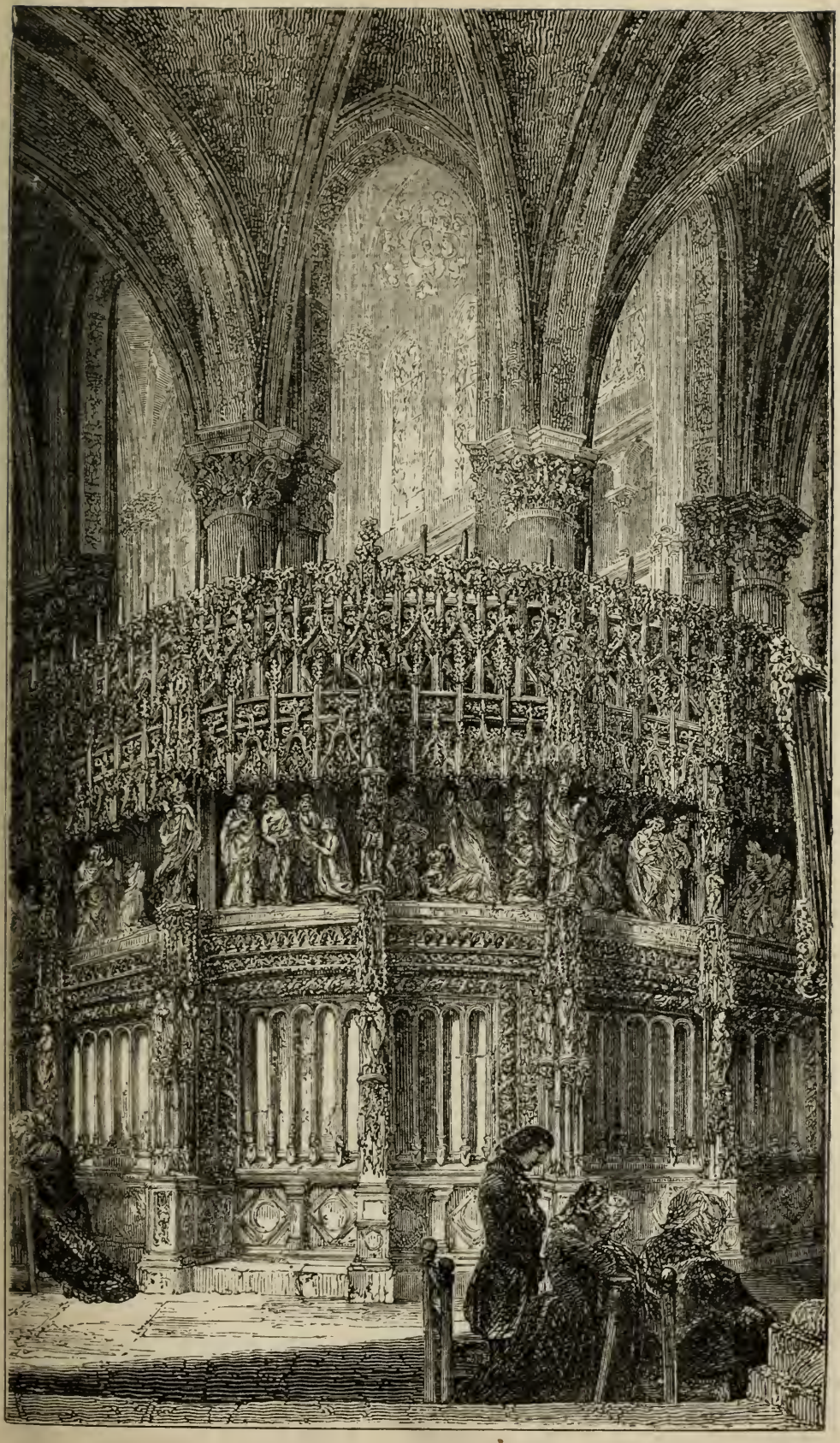
"No," replied H. C. "Our sympathies are all with you, and you have been a charming guide."

She looked delighted. "Ah, what a real gentleman he is," she said to me. "What graceful compliments he pays. Fancy calling a fat old woman like me charming! I haven't been called charming these twenty years." And then she looked at me and added: "What a pity that you don't pay compliments too! But it is not given to everyone to be elegant in his expressions. I daresay monsieur has his merits, but they don't appear. And now," she added, "good-bye; and bon voyage, when you leave. You will not easily find a cathedral to match that of Chartres. Many and many a traveller has told me they never saw its equal."

Her substantial image flitted through the still more substantial doorway, leaving us within the building. It seemed impossible to separate ourselves from all this matchless beauty and grandeur, this high and holy influence. We had it almost to ourselves. Far down a sister of charity was flitting across the nave with noiseless tread and disappeared through a doorway, no doubt on some errand of mercy; administering to the necessities of the body, or quieting the anxieties of the soul.

We too had to go, for we wanted to see something more of the town, and we followed in the wake of our substantial guide. She had disappeared into her little conciergerie, which looked hardly large enough to contain her.

After all, there was great beauty without the cathedral as well as within. A blue, unclouded sky; a sun high and brilliant in the heavens, pouring his flood of golden light upon everything; a clear atmosphere that made us feel as if we were treading upon air.



CHARTRES CATHEDRAL (INTERIOR).

We passed round into the market place. It was crowded with buyers and sellers. Women sat at their stalls presiding over their goods, getting the best price they could for them. Ladies and servants with huge baskets were driving hard bargains, squabbling over sous and centimes, as if the fate of empires depended on them. It was a lively and animated scene. The air seemed full of sunshine, full of the sound of many voices. And such voices! We went about with our small instantaneous camera, creating laughter and confusion. Many of the groups were infinitely funny and picturesque. The women chattered and laughed, and asked questions, and were violently interested, and begged to be taken and immortalised, and were as friendly as if we had known them a hundred years.

The fruit stalls were pictures of beauty, the apples and grapes might have come straight from Olympus. It was a quaint, irregular market place—like everything else in Chartres, where the streets are all narrow and steep and tortuous. Just beyond it we came to a wonderfully picturesque bit of the town. Some ancient houses, gabled and latticed, and ready to fall, as it seemed: all the more interesting for the modern and far less beautiful houses that surrounded them. It was the outskirt of the market, and picturesque carts were lying about, tilted up in the air and reposing on their long shafts until the labours of the day were over, and they conducted empty baskets and full purses and happy housewives back to their country farms, their spotless dairies and lively poultry yards.

Just beyond, we were at the brow of the hill. We looked down upon small flourishing gardens; upon quaint, gabled, red-tiled roofs; one house below another, all placed in delightful irregularity; the sunshine pouring down upon all, warm as summer, throwing deep lights and shadows everywhere: a picture of intense beauty; a wealth of nature and art—for these wonderful old houses are artistic to the last degree, both in form and colouring, and blend with the green trees and the blue sky as if, like the trees, they had sprung from the earth and the hand of man had had nothing to do with them. Beyond all stretched far away the great plains of the Beauce.

At the bottom of the hill the Porte Guillaume stood out nobly with its double towers and battlemented roofs. It is the only one remaining of the seven ancient gates of the town: and if man will only spare it, it may well defy time itself. Many old houses are in its neighbourhood, and near it a staircase enclosed in a sort of turret, called l'escalier de la Reine Berthe. It is a fragment of a Renaissance building, of old grey wood, very interesting, and crowned with a red-tiled, conical-shaped roof.

At the bottom of the hill runs the river Eure, its banks beautiful and picturesque. Washing sheds are conspicuous, and women on their knees are scrubbing and rinsing clothes, and beating them upon boards, in a manner that makes one tremble for the linen. The scene is wonderfully interesting. The banks are green and verdant,

and graceful with waving, overhanging trees. The hill slopes upwards, and the houses dotted about are embowered in trees and verdure. The sunshine glints and sparkles over all and through all. It gives one a feeling of inexpressible happiness, appealing to all that is best within one, holding commune with the soul itself.

Above this beautiful hill, towering skywards, rise the lovely spires of the cathedral, the crown and glory of Chartres; adding beauty and dignity, almost sacredness to the view. Upon these scenes one longs to gaze for ever; the eye is never satisfied with looking, nor the ear with listening to the soothing sounds: the murmuring of the trees, the quiet rippling of the stream. We have left the noisy thoroughfares of the world for its quiet by-ways, where all is pleasantness and all is peace.

We were much taken with Chartres. It left a vivid impression upon us. We longed for more time in which to know it better. It seemed a place in which one might settle for a while: it might be months or years: and live a very happy life. Many spots of France have become colonies for the English: we wonder that Chartres has escaped. It has beautiful surroundings. It is very picturesque in itself. The quiet waters of the Eure lend it their charm. The people seemed very pleasant and primitive, very unspoiled; everything was thoroughly French, and neither sight nor sound of English met the eye or ear. Above all—literally towering above all—is that glorious cathedral in which you may take refuge from the world; gaze upon the wonders and beauties of architecture; lose yourself in dreams of a realm to which we are all hastening, and feel yourself overshadowed by a Divine Presence.

SONNET.

THINK not, hope not thine aim to reach; there are
Draughts too divine for man—e'en as he sips,
Their sweetness turns to gall upon his lips.
Aims reached are worthless. Let thine shine afar,
As shines o'er night a great and tranquil star
That grows in beauty as the night wears on.
Thus over thee may thy bright star look down,
Nor darkness nor yet cloud its pure light mar.
Because it burns so high, feel not forlorn,
Look up through this earth's night of toil and strife;
Look up! it is the purpose of thy life.
Look up to Love, to Trust, to Faith—that look
Is written down in God's eternal book;
Look up until the coming of the Morn.

JULIA KAVANAGH.

MRS. WALSINGHAM'S BUTTERFLY.

WHEN Mrs. Walsingham lost the diamond butterfly which her husband had given her on the first anniversary of their wedding day, she was naturally much perturbed by her loss.

For two seasons Mrs. Walsingham's butterfly had been an absorbing topic of conversation, whenever pretty Mrs. Walsingham herself happened to be present, and on more than one occasion it had attracted the admiring attention of Royalty.

And now the butterfly was lost! The world—or rather such portion of it as was crowded into the Court Theatre on that disastrous night—had seen the jewelled insect flashing and scintillating in Mrs. Walsingham's pretty brown hair all the time of the performance. But when husband and wife stood in the light of their own hall lamp, the former had uttered an exclamation of dismay.

The butterfly was gone!

Everything had been done that is usual in such cases. The Colonel had looked carefully in the carriage, and had made a thorough examination of each separate fold in his wife's dress. Next morning he had gone off to the theatre and had himself searched the box in which they had been sitting. Then, with commendable prudence, he had cautioned his wife against speaking about her loss, even to the servants, and in the advertisement in which he offered a considerable reward for the recovery of the missing trinket, he had described it as "a jewelled insect (PASTE), valuable to the owner, because specially designed for the Polish wife of Prince Boris Ivanvitch, when she secretly sold the Ivanvitch diamonds to supply her compatriots with funds for a revolutionary uprising."

The Colonel was very pleased with the wording of this advertisement, and read it aloud with a great deal of complacency to his wife.

Mrs. Walsingham was not quite so pleased as her husband. She objected to the slight put upon her cherished possession by describing it as paste, and the aristocratic flavour of its mythical history did not console her.

"Even if I do get it back," she murmured plaintively, "I shan't care to wear it if everybody imagines it is paste."

When, however, the Colonel pointed out that he had referred the public in the first instance to a neighbouring stationer's, and that there was nothing whatever in the advertisement to suggest to a captious world that Mrs. Walsingham's famous butterfly was in question, she was greatly impressed by her husband's cleverness.

That evening the Walsinghams did not dine out, but had a cosy *tête-à-tête* dinner at home, so as to be on the spot if anyone came with news of the stolen jewel.

"Not that I am at all sanguine," said the Colonel, as he thoughtfully peeled a banana. "If the thief had happened to be a stray pickpocket, we might hope to see the 'fly' again. It's more likely, though, that the vagabond who has the thing now had his eye on it for some time past."

But even as he spoke the solemn butler came softly in.

"A person to see you, sir," he announced, deferentially; "he won't give his name, but he says Foster (the stationer) has sent him, and that you will know all about it."

Mrs. Walsingham gave a little start of delight, and the Colonel could scarcely conceal his excitement. "Show him in here, Bailey," he said quickly; "it is someone we are expecting."

The butler withdrew, and in a few seconds ushered in a slight, gentlemanly-looking man, with sharp grey eyes and smooth face.

"Colonel Walsingham, I believe?" began the stranger, taking with easy self-possession the chair which the Colonel indicated at the far end of the table.

The Colonel assented. "You have come, I presume——"

"To give information about some lost property of yours. Precisely."

"Have you found it?" queried Mrs. Walsingham eagerly.

"Well, that's just what I wish to ascertain," said the stranger suavely. "My name is Sawder, Fred Sawder, late of Scotland Yard," he continued, turning to the Colonel. "I'm a detective, and a few hours back I came across a piece of jewelry answering to your description."

"You don't mean to say so?" cried the Colonel excitedly. "Where did you find it?"

"Well, it's a long story," said Mr. Sawder, deliberately, "and brings in matters which are, so to speak, professional secrets at present. But there—the whole account will be in the papers to-morrow, so there's no harm in my telling you."

Both the Colonel and Mrs. Walsingham waited anxiously for him to go on, and after a few seconds' pause, he was graciously pleased to do so, pointedly addressing himself now to Mrs. Walsingham.

"Of course, madam, you have heard of the great Fenton Court robbery?"

Mrs. Walsingham made a motion of assent.

"Er—well—the fact is, to-day I had the good fortune to recover nearly all that stolen jewelry. I have just telegraphed to Mr. Fenton to come up and identify the things to-morrow."

"You have got back the diamonds?"

"Everything, madam, as far as we can tell."

"Tell us all about it," commanded Mrs. Walsingham in her pretty, imperious manner, while her husband's face seconded her request.

"Oh, well, there's not much to tell, ma'am. From information received, we made this morning a raid on the house of a party called Sleepy Jim—sleepy, because he just isn't sleepy, don't you see,

madam? Well, Jim was very easy and careless, and we searched and searched, and not a thing could we find, and at last we gave it up. I was the last to go, and as I went, I heard—for my ears are quick—I heard Jim give the least little bit of a sigh.

"'Come back, men,' I shouted; 'the things *are* here and we won't be such numskulls as to go away without them. Let's have one more look round.' Then it occurred to me that Sleepy Jim had not been sitting on the table for nothing all the time we were turning his place upside down. So I just pushed him and it on one side, kicked over the square of carpet on which the table had been standing, and lo and behold, there were plain signs that the boards had been raised pretty recently.

"We had those boards up again in a jiffy, and there in a deep hole underneath was all the Fenton Court jewelry!"

The detective paused impressively and looked at his two eager listeners, as though challenging their admiration.

"Well, and my wife's butterfly?" asked the Colonel inquiringly.

"I am coming to that, sir. Among the things there were several pins and brooches not included in the list supplied to us at Scotland Yard. I had seen your advertisement, and I thought one of the miscellaneous articles looked very much like your insect. So I just asked Sleepy Jim about it, and he told me that it had been brought to him by a man who had picked it up in Sloane Street, and had been afraid to pawn it. Jim gave him thirty shillings for it; for he saw the diamonds were uncommon good paste, and——"

"But they are nothing of the sort," put in Mrs. Walsingham indignantly; "that was only my husband's idea to call them paste."

"Ah!—That was smart, sir, very smart. You ought to be one of us."

The Colonel looked gratified. "Won't you take a glass of wine, Mr. Sawder?" he said, pushing the decanter over to him.

"Thank you, sir, I don't mind if I do," replied Mr. Sawder, helping himself, and he required little pressing to be induced to repeat the action several times in the course of the next hour.

As a consequence, he soon grew exceedingly communicative and entertained the Colonel with the most thrilling Scotland Yard narratives, all illustrative of the cleverness of rogues and the superior astuteness of detectives.

"It's not that the criminal classes are so especially clever," he remarked, judicially, as he wound up one of his tales; "but the public is so uncommonly soft!"

The Colonel acquiesced. There were a great many fools in the world, he opined; but for his part he had no pity for them. He himself had never been taken in in his life.

"I can quite believe that," said Mr. Sawder, politely; "and if I may make so free, I repeat again you ought to be one of us."

The Colonel did not at all resent Mr. Sawder's freedom. He

was particularly pleased with him and his stories, and in the fulness of his heart he told him he was going down to his club for half-an-hour, and would be charmed to give him a lift.

Mr. Sawder was quite sensible of the Colonel's condescension, and accepted the offer with effusion. Having arranged with Mrs. Walsingham that she was to come down to Scotland Yard the following morning, he went off with the Colonel into the adjoining room, waiting there while this gentleman got ready to go out. This room was a sort of sanctum of Colonel Walsingham, and while he drew on his gloves, he passed in review his collection of fire-arms and other objects of warlike predilection.

The detective seemed a bit of a connoisseur, and his enthusiasm was sufficiently dashed with discriminating knowledge to be particularly pleasing to the Colonel, who actually deigned to bring out from a cavernous cupboard his latest extravagance: to wit, a handsome fur-lined coat he had recently imported from Russia.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

"Think?" said the detective; "why, that it's not a thing to be left in the hall."

"Rather not," laughed the Colonel; "we keep it in the cupboard in this room. Why, that coat cost me eighty guineas!"

"It looks as if it had," said the detective, warmly, and the Colonel being now ready, the two gentlemen got into their hansom and drove off.

It was scarcely half-an-hour afterwards that there was a hasty pull at the door bell. Mrs. Walsingham was tired and had gone to bed, and the household had followed her example. The butler alone was still up, busy with the silver in his pantry.

"Why, master's forgotten his latch-key!" he cried, hurrying to the door; "it's lucky for me he's come back so early."

But it was not Colonel Walsingham who stood in the doorway —it was Mr. Sawder.

"Sorry to trouble you, my man," he said, speaking very fast, and slipping a shilling into Bailey's hand; "but I left some most important papers behind me, which I was showing to Colonel and Mrs. Walsingham. Will you give them to me?"

"Papers, sir? I haven't seen any."

"But they *must* be here," cried Mr. Sawder, looking very worried. "The fact is—I daresay Mrs. Walsingham told you—these papers have to do with the Fenton Court robbery. We nabbed the man and the swag this afternoon, and the owner's coming up to-morrow. So you see the papers are awfully important."

"Of course, they must be," said the butler, unbending from his solemn dignity on the instant. "Well, I'll just light a taper and see if they are anywhere in the dining-room. I may have overlooked them, but I don't think I have."

The detective followed him into the dining-room and helped in

the search, but no papers were to be found, and he grew more and more anxious.

"I tell you what it is," he began in a vexed tone, "Mrs. Walsingham must have noticed them directly we had gone, and, knowing their importance, must have locked them up somewhere. Now if you can get them for me to-night I'll not forget you."

Bailey's kindness, or his affection for the prospective coin, made him consent, after a little demur, to do what he could.

"I'll go upstairs and call up one of the women servants," he said, "and then send her to ask Mrs. Walsingham. I'll shout up to the under housemaid," he added; "she'll come like winking when she hears my voice."

It took longer to get the housemaid to come down, however, than the butler had anticipated, but at last she had gone off on her embassy, and had brought her mistress's answer to Bailey, patiently waiting on the upper landing.

"I'm sorry, sir," he began, as he descended the last flight of stairs, "but Mrs. Walsingham hasn't seen your papers."

Then he stopped short. The rosy tints fled from his well-nourished face, and a bilious hue took possession of that broad expanse.

The street-door was open, and Mr. Sawder had disappeared.

"A 'do,'" murmured Bailey faintly; "a real old 'do.'"

He thought of his plate, and almost breathed again as he remembered that he had deposited it in the plate-chest and turned the key before he had let the insidious stranger in.

"Depend upon it, he's only gone off with master's umbrella," he said, trying to reassure himself.

The next moment he struck his hands wildly together, and rushed into the Colonel's study. When he came back he was perfectly green. *The Colonel's fur coat, for which he had paid eighty guineas only a few weeks back, was nowhere to be found!*

The officials of Scotland Yard next morning listened with polite attention to Colonel Walsingham's account of what had happened.

"A clean-shaven man, with grey eyes, you say?"

"Yes," was the answer. "He gave the name of Sawder—Fred Sawder."

"Fred Sawder! The man was James Croft, alias Sleepy Jim, the cleverest rogue in the United Kingdom, and as slippery as an eel. I am afraid you will never see your coat again, sir."

And he was right, for the Colonel never did. But one result of his little experience was that he completely changed his views of criminals.

"It is not that the public is so stupid," he was often heard to say; "it is those scamps who are so horribly clever."

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF AN AGED GENTLEWOMAN.

IT is almost a point of honour with our sex not to reveal our age, and I am not going to reveal mine; but I may just whisper that I was twelve years old the very month of the very year in which the battle of Waterloo was fought.

I have lately returned from visiting a dear friend in the country whose age is nearly the same as my own. There was a young lady staying at my friend's house who is engaged to be married to a lieutenant in the army. Miss M.'s betrothed was at that time in Egypt engaged in the last desert campaign, and it was painful to witness the anxiety with which the poor girl awaited each morning the arrival of the post. Any hour might bring her tidings that her lover was killed or wounded. But what struck me more than all—being an old-fashioned body—was the terrible celerity, if I may call it so, with which such dread news reaches those who are waiting and watching here in England. For instance, in a newspaper dated, say, the 26th of the month, it is possible to read that on the morning of the 25th a skirmish has taken place among those terrible sand-hills, in which Captain A. and Colour-sergeant B. have been killed and Lieutenant C. wounded. Within twenty-four hours after the event we in England are told what has happened six thousand miles away! When such blows have to fall it is surely more merciful that they should fall swiftly than that the aching hearts at home should not learn for weeks or perhaps months after the event, as used to be the case at one time, that their dear one is lost to them for ever.

These considerations brought freshly to my memory some of the half-forgotten events of my youthful days—of days when the torch of war blazed far and wide over the Continent of Europe, and when Bonaparte was being slowly hemmed in by that belt of fire which he himself had been the first to fan into a flame.

At that time, and for years afterwards, I lived with my parents in a little town in the north of England, which, for this occasion, I will call Muncastle. It was on one of the main lines of road from London to the North, besides being no great distance from two or three important centres of industry. As a consequence, quite a considerable number of coaches passed through it every day, all of which stopped to change horses at the King's Arms, while two of them even stopped to dine—the passengers, not the coaches.

My elder sisters used generally to contrive that their walks into the town should take place when the mail either from the north or south was due, and a great many other ladies did likewise. There was quite a pleasant bustle on the "pavement" at such times, and occasionally

we were so fortunate as to catch a glimpse of the latest London fashions, as some stylishly-dressed lady stepped into or out of the coach just as one or other of us chanced to be passing.

Poor Mr. Popplewick, the landlord of the King's Arms, who, I always felt in my own mind, was intended by Nature for a master of ceremonies at Bath or Cheltenham, so overflowing was he with a sort of pompous affability, did not live more than a year after the opening of the railway to our little town. With the extinction of coaches his occupation was gone. He was worth twenty thousand pounds and might have retired any day, but he just lingered on in the old house and moped slowly to death. Very characteristic were his last words. He had been lying unconscious for several hours, when all at once he started up in bed. "Listen!" he said. "There's Highflyer coming. Ring the bell for John Ostler. Hark! the horn again. She's only three minutes and a half behind time."

With a satisfied smile he sank back on his pillows and never spoke again.

I remember that old Mr. Monkhouse, the confectioner—all the gentlefolk used to deal at Monkhouse's—made his will before venturing to journey to London and back by coach, so impressed was he with the magnitude and manifold dangers of the undertaking he proposed to himself. To be sure, Mr. Monkhouse had been born and bred in Muncastle, and had never been farther than a score miles away from it. But to anyone not in the habit of travelling, a journey to the metropolis in those days was a matter of considerable moment, and was arranged and prepared for a month or two beforehand. When the time came to set out there was quite a solemn leave-taking to be gone through with relatives and friends, and the last words addressed to the intending traveller generally were, "God bless you! and be sure you don't forget to write the moment you arrive." If I recollect rightly, at this distance of time, the London mail was between two and three days on the road, so that ladies, and, indeed, anyone who could not boast of a robust constitution, might well stand in dread of such a journey, more especially when it had to be undertaken in the depth of winter.

I recollect being startled one afternoon, as I was walking out with my mother, by the sudden apparition of a horseman, who came tearing along the highway as though his errand were a matter of life and death. As he flashed past us I could just discern that he carried a leather bag behind him, slung by a strap across his shoulder; also that his heels were armed with long spurs, and that the sides of his horse seemed one mass of blood and lather. I turned to my mother with a shudder.

"It is the King's messenger," she explained, "carrying important despatches from Scotland to London."

"But his poor horse seems ready to drop," I said.

"There will be a fresh horse waiting for him at the King's Arms,

which will carry him as far as B. There he will find another horse, and so, stage by stage, he will make his way to London."

"But surely it cannot be necessary that his horse should be treated so shamefully?"

"One would think not," answered my mother; "but I suppose the messengers have to do the journey in a certain specified time, and it would never do for the King to be kept waiting."

Several times afterwards I saw the King's couriers flash through the town, but never without a feeling of pity for their poor horses. Railways did not come into existence for many years later. When they came we saw the mounted messengers no more.

In those days we had to look to the coaches to bring us all the news. In the height of the war-fever half the population of the town, young and old, rich and poor, used to crowd into the streets to wait for the coming of the London mail. When the guard had good news for us he used to hoist a white flag on the coach just before entering the town, and when the people caught sight of the flag the glad hurrahs that went up to heaven brought tears to my eyes many a time.

But when the guard had no news, or ill news, there was no flag. Then we all waited in a sort of dread expectancy till the guard had distributed the two or three newspapers that he could spare us, for our impatience would not allow us to wait for the regular distribution by the postman. The fortunate few who got possession of the papers never thought of keeping the news to themselves. A ring was formed round them, and they read the news aloud. Frequently they had to read it again and again, till the crowd were satisfied and dispersed. But even when the white flag waved over the coach many a wife's and mother's heart quaked with dread. Nearly one half of the men of a certain regiment belonged to Muncastle and its neighbourhood, and every great victory brought desolation to one or more homes in our little town.

Those were the days of balloting for the army. My uncle William was one who was drawn to serve, but as he was a professional man whose business would have been ruined had he been compelled to leave home, he paid thirty pounds for a substitute and so obtained exemption. It is pleasant to think that his substitute, Sam Perryman, came back from the wars safe and sound, and lived for a dozen years afterwards. It is not unlikely that he might have lived still longer had he not, during his later days, developed such a fondness for old ale. I am afraid that Sam's soldiering spoiled him ever afterwards for honest work. He was a shoemaker by trade, and after he came home from the wars—he really had been in two or three battles—he found himself made so much of, and that so many quarts of ale were to be had without payment, that little by little he got into the habit of spending two-thirds of his time in the chimney-corner of one tap-room or another—wherever, in fact, there was ale to be had for nothing.

For months and months during that terrible time, we expected every day to hear that Bonaparte had landed somewhere on the coast with a hundred thousand men. Even little children caught the prevalent panic. I remember that for a long time my cousin Matilda, after she had said her prayers, and given her good-night kiss, would seize my mother's gown and say imploringly, "Oh! aunty, aunty, do you think that Boney will come to-night?" I recollect that on one occasion she came rushing to my bed all a tremble with fright, and vowing that she was sure Boney had landed because she could hear the firing of big guns a long way off. The night was a stormy one, but it was long before I could persuade her that what she had heard was nothing but the banging of the stable door in the wind.

My cousin Harry was the first who brought to Muncastle the news of the Peace after the battle of Waterloo. There was quite a race among the London coaches which should be first to carry the news down to different parts of the country. The "Swiftsure" left London with a full complement of passengers, but the pace at which it travelled was so alarming that one by one they quitted it at different places on the road, till only Harry, together with driver and guard, were left. The coach was dressed out with flags, and at every town and village through which it passed, newspapers and broadsheets containing the great news were thrown out by Harry and the guard. I shall never forget how they came driving into Muncastle, as though pursued by a troop of demons. The poor horses were white with foam, the driver had lost his hat, and Harry and the guard were sitting on the top playing *God save the King* on two bugles as well as the insecure nature of their seats would allow of their doing, for the coach rocked from side to side as if at any moment it might topple over. I thought the people would have torn Harry to pieces when they got hold of him; it was as though they were drunk with joy and excitement.

There came a day, a little while later, when we saw the reverse of the picture. That was the day when "our regiment," as we proudly called it, returned from the wars. Out of three hundred men who had gone from Muncastle and the neighbouring villages, less than one hundred came back. Less than one hundred! Think of that. Half the town seemed to be in mourning. Nearly everybody had lost either a relative or a friend. The regiment had fresh colours presented to it a little while afterwards. The glorious old colours that had been over half the world and in half-a-hundred battles were hung up, all battered and torn as they were, in the Abbey Church, and there they hang to this day. There is no line in the Prayer Book to which I respond more fervently on Sundays than to that one which says, "*Give peace in our time, O Lord!*"

AN INCIDENT IN MR. LANFORD'S LIFE.

A Sketch.

THERE was no expression of annoyance on Mr. Lanford's face as on the very day of his departure for a trip abroad he received a letter at breakfast from the friend who was to accompany him, saying he was unable to carry out his contract, owing to unavoidable circumstances. Although Percy Gyde was what ladies call the "dearest friend Lanford possessed," this latter gentleman took the news and the prospect of his solitary journey with the greatest composure.

His meal ended, he proceeded to pack and, an hour later, unlike the other sex, to whom packing is almost as exhaustive a process as shopping, had finished just as Mrs. Beach, his laundress, entered his chambers.

After Lanford had paid and tipped her, the lady asked: "Are you going to leave all them letters about, sir?"

"Yes, Mrs. Beach," returned the gentleman, coolly and significantly. "I have locked up all my letters that I prefer not to have read. These are chiefly bills, and as they are mostly paid, it don't much matter who sees them."

Mrs. Beach was pleased to consider Lanford as a "funny" man, and those remarks of his which she did not wish to understand were only part of his humour.

Lanford continued from his bedroom, where he was rummaging about:

"I must apologise for the antiquity of the collars I am leaving behind, Mrs. Beach. I hope, however, the shape will atone in your son's eyes for this little defect; as for my ties and socks, well, it is unnecessary to tell you and your family to make yourselves quite at home with regard to them. It really is very forgetful of me not to have had my piano tuned—perhaps, however, you would ask Miss Beach not to play her distracting airs at eleven o'clock at night, as some of those disagreeable fellows underneath complained that it interfered with their work last time—they did remark that there must have been something wrong with the loud pedal—but what can you expect of barristers?"

Mrs. Beach remarked: "Lor, sir! how you do go on," and entering his chamber, added: "You are not looking well, sir; perhaps this little trip abroad will do you good," after which she proceeded to make a tremendous bustle and shaking-up, and drove Lanford into the other apartments, where he relapsed into an arm-chair with a pipe.

He was an habitual smoker, and keenly appreciated the habit, but no expression of relaxation came into his handsome, melancholy

face as he sat on, doing nothing. As a rule men's faces are less expressive than women's, possibly owing to the greater necessity for self-control; and beyond a settled melancholy, almost sadness, about his dark eyes, and rather cynical mouth, you would not have gathered a very correct notion of the man, Gilbert Lanford, from his exterior. He was one of those men who are scarcely ever understood by other men, owing to the thick mark of pride and cynicism which conceals the real sensitive, rather sentimental self. Lanford was usually labelled, even by his most intimate friends, as a rather selfish, extremely hard headed, able and witty individual; and perhaps out of the whole number of them not one dreamt of the other side of his being.

He was one of those unfortunate men who possess a temperament —only pardonable in a genius—which from its very nature prevents its owner from having any permanent happiness.

That is to say, he had that vague, restless kind of nature—scarcely ever to be found in the successful practical man, or in the pure idealist or artist: but in the man whose sentimental and poetic side is as developed as his logical faculty.

One saw no particular reason (unless you were his doctor, and knew how much physical considerations influenced him mentally) to pity a man in the prime of life who was blessed with an abundance of money, who had already achieved a name amongst the men of letters of his day, and who might have been, had he chosen, a favourite with men and women.

Lanford himself hardly knew why life appeared to him so incomprehensible and unsatisfactory a thing. He could not even account for it on the score of a love disappointment. Many women had cared for him, but up to his thirty-fourth year they all appeared to him more or less charming in any state but as his wife—indeed, the woman who should satisfy Mr. Lanford's delicate, refined tastes, and at the same time his desire for originality and freshness, had not yet appeared.

Mrs. Beach, seeing him in what she phrased one of his "gloomy moods" (being a woman, she never could understand the possibility of a man remaining quiescent for half an hour, doing nothing, and not being intensely miserable), tried to cheer him up by remarking how his friends would miss him.

Lanford smiled rather sardonically, and said:

"Ah, that *is* a pleasing reflection, Mrs. Beach; I believe I *do* give rather good dinners; and so far as wine and cigars are concerned, my departure will no doubt plunge all my dear friends in grief—it would be more considerate of me to lay in a stock of both and place them at their disposal—this possibly might console them."

But after the manner of her sex, Mrs. Beach was absorbed in some domestic detail, and merely remarked "What, sir?" when Lanford came to an end, at which the man groaned; remarked it

was too hot to repeat his valuable utterances, and went to Park Lane to bid his mother and sisters adieu.

As to Lanford's female belongings, the correct word to apply to them is that elastic one "charming"—which in this case really expresses everything, and which, to a discerning person, may account for the reason that Lanford's best self—if he possessed one—never appeared in the artificial atmosphere of his mother's house.

"My dear boy," remarked his mother, an exceedingly handsome lady, whose virtues did not equal her age, which, by the bye, was most successfully concealed: "How ill you look—I am so glad you are going off, and that Mr. Gyde, who is so nice and lively, is going with you."

"Cut short your raptures, my dear mother," said her son. "Gyde is not going."

"Not going!—Well, Bertie, you don't propose to go alone?"

"Certainly," returned Gilbert, composedly; "and on the whole there are great disadvantages in having a travelling companion, one has to preserve a certain amount of decent restraint in taking the best of everything, which is a bore."

"Bertie, I never knew anyone like you. I thought you were fond of Mr. Gyde—you ought to be—he is very fond of you."

Her son shrugged his shoulders.

"I leave all these affecting emotions to you and the girls, my dear mother."

This was not a nice speech from a son to a mother, above all when the mother had the antecedents of Mrs. Lanford; but bitter little speeches such as these—the sting of which lay in the knowledge of the two persons alone concerned—were not very uncommon with Gilbert in the family circle; and it is not particularly wonderful that neither his mother nor his beautiful sisters bore much affection for him. They, however, ascribed one virtue to Gilbert, that of "reliableness," which, owing to their volatility, was often called into requisition.

II.

It cannot be asserted with any veracity that Lanford rendered himself generally attractive whilst pursuing his journey to Brussels. On board, after asking himself half-a dozen times why he had come, he settled himself in gloomy silence at as great a distance as was possible from the rest of his compatriots. A really beautiful young lady, with cheeks as pink as the most superior paint could produce, and fine locks of the most approved bronze colour, surveyed his pale, handsome face, with its lustrous dark eyes, with a good deal of approval, and made every advance consistent with the propriety of a British maiden; but all to no effect—Lanford, stupidly preferring nature to art, puffed away stolidly and unconcernedly.

An altogether harmless young man, "believing," as he afterwards informed his friends, "that the cad was a gentleman," remarked that it was "an uncommonly fine night;" as, however, the cad in question

received the statement with a quiet little stare, the possible conversation dropped, and the young man returned to his more genial companion, where Mr. Lanford's haughty deportment drew forth some uncomplimentary comments—a few of which floated to his ear, but did not in any way discompose him. He could not for the life of him help feeling, not so much contempt as distaste, for these young men, all of whom he admitted led, no doubt, much more useful lives than he, but whose conversation on the subject of racing and the drama bored him unutterably.

Unfortunately, if you have lived to the age of five-and-thirty, and in a fastidious, refined kind of way gratified yourself in every particular, it is possible most things will seem more or less boring—as was indeed the case with Mrs. Lanford's son. It is a little difficult to understand how Lanford could conceive that a tour abroad—which was about his twentieth experience—could remedy a weariness which was an integral part of himself.

After the fascinating young lady and her companion had retreated from the Lanford assault, Gilbert found himself alone at the upper end of the boat for a few moments. He had no sooner misanthropically congratulated himself on this fact than an elderly man, who walked in an exceedingly feeble manner, seated himself close beside him, and attempted to twist some rugs about his legs, which he succeeded in doing after a good many clumsy efforts.

His face was striking enough to arrest even Gilbert's listless attention. It was one of those clearly-cut, delicate faces often seen in elderly men of great intellectuality, without a trace of hair on it to mar the beauty of feature. In this case the tremulousness of the mouth and the softness of the mild blue eyes forewarned you not to expect great moral or mental strength; but you would have guessed at the first shot that this fine old head, with its thick, curling grey hair, belonged to a painter, or a poet, or a musician. Owing to his reserve—partly constitutional, partly cultivated—it is probable that Gilbert would have contented himself with a momentary curiosity as to whom the old man could be had he not seen him press his hands to his breast as if in acute pain. Even then Gilbert hesitated, having the strongest objection himself to be spoken to by a stranger; but the old man looked at him in a helpless kind of manner which Gilbert, not being exactly a brute, felt he could not resist. He went to his side, and said courteously:

"I am afraid you are ill. Can I do anything for you?"

The old man took his hand tremblingly, and murmured his regret for troubling him.

"If the gentleman would be so good as to fetch him a little brandy."

Gilbert immediately handed him his own flask, and a few minutes later the old gentleman was well enough to accept a cigar. A little desultory conversation followed, in the midst of which Gilbert said:

"I am afraid you are hardly in a fit state to travel. Do you intend remaining in Brussels?"

"No, no!" said the old man eagerly. "My daughter is expecting me—waiting for me at Dresden."

Gilbert said nothing—but the elder man apparently did not find him unsympathetic, for he said, speaking with a nervous eagerness:

"Ah, sir—I feel as if I should like to tell you—you are not like most young gentlemen. I read something most noble in your countenance." And he looked at Gilbert's sad dark face; at which the younger man smiled a little and said, gently touched by something child-like in the soft white hair and gentle blue eyes:

"If I can do anything for you—I am at your service. I believe I am right in thinking this is your first sea-voyage?"

"My first—yes," and he shrugged his shoulders. "You see I am scarcely fit for it—but I am going to fetch my daughter. Oh, sir, you do not know the joy of what this meeting will be to us—a father separated from his only daughter for fifteen years—fifteen years," he repeated mournfully.

Gilbert had too fine a stock of tact to say anything—and the old man went on: "You are beginning life—I am nearly at the end—but I feel drawn to you—perhaps because I feel so joyful—my dear little Jenny!"

Doubts as to the sanity of the elderly stranger began to creep over Gilbert's cautious mind, and he hazarded a remark:

"You have been separated from your daughter for fifteen years?" He really felt not the slightest interest in the answer—but the evident illness and loneliness of the old man disposed him to make some test of his saneness.

"Fifteen years ago, when little Jenny was a child, she was taken from me and her poor mother. You see, sir, it seems unnatural for a parent to part with one of his children, but if you only knew the circumstances—if you only knew the circumstances, sir." There was no mistaking the intense desire on the part of the old man to relate the "circumstances."

With an inward groan, and not a little surprise at his own goodness, Gilbert resigned himself to the recital and said:

"I am sure circumstances may arise in which such a course might be necessary."

"Yes, sir, that's what I've said to myself over and over again. You see, I made a mistake in the beginning—we were young and thoughtless, both of us—and we ran away. Heaven knows we both regretted it; but she, poor thing, suffered most. Jenny's mother—I mean. What she saw in me I never could make out. She a beauty and a great lady, the daughter of a peer, and I nothing but a poor organist; but I believe in those days," drawing up his old head proudly, "five-and-twenty years ago, I was as handsome a fellow as you could see."

Gilbert remarked there was every evidence of the fact still remaining; but he concealed his surprise that the old man whom he had judged sixty-five must be more than ten, perhaps fifteen, years younger. The old man went on in a half apologetic kind of tone, more as if he were relating the story to satisfy himself:

"Yes, there's no doubt I was a handsome fellow—but—" here his head drooped, and he went on in a piteous tone—"that doesn't satisfy a woman for long—and you can't blame her—brought up to every luxury—there was no one to blame but me ——" his self-reproaching tone died to a whisper.

Gilbert pressed the old man's hand underneath the rug; he did not dare to hazard a remark, as he imagined the peer's daughter had disgraced herself.

When he raised his head he said humbly: "Perhaps I'm troubling you, sir?"

"Not in the least," returned Lanford; "only don't tell me if it distresses you."

"Ah, it's all gone now—she never forgave me for bringing her to poverty. God knows I did my best, and was punished enough. Not a farthing would her mother give us, even when the five boys were living, and I only earning fifteen shillings a week as an organist on Sundays at the village church. Then—she died—died without forgiving me—a few months after little Geneviève was born. And then my five boys died one after another——Oh, I was punished——"

The pathetic figure of the old man did not prevent Gilbert from experiencing a feeling of embarrassment as he saw that the old man's emotion was being observed. To divert him from his painful reminiscences, he asked: "And the little girl—what became of her?"

"There I did wrong again," returned the old man with his touching humility. "Her grandmother consented to take her on condition I gave up all claim to her. Before you judge me, sir, remember I was desperately poor and had five strong boys to provide for—and her mother had wished it——"

"And now, I suppose, Miss Jenny wants to see you?"

An almost painful expression of expectant happiness swept over the old man's face. All the unhappy memories of the past were forgotten as he said, with a joyful ring in his voice: "No, her grandmother died last week, and, thank God, relented before she died. She consented that Jenny, whom she had up to now forbidden to hold any intercourse with me, should have her choice of staying with me for six months. I wrote to my dear little girl—and I am on my way to her. Isn't it good of her? because you see she is surrounded by all these aristocratic relatives of her mother's, who look down on me—not without good reason ——"

Gilbert cut short the self-depreciation that he saw coming.

"And at the end of the six months," he asked, "where is she going?"

The old man clasped his hands nervously.

"Oh, I hope she will stay with me for the few remaining years of my life! I will make her so happy! And do you think it would be very dull for a young girl with an old man? I have saved up money for her, and she can have pictures and dresses as she likes. I have made a fair name as a composer. Perhaps, sir," he said modestly, "you have heard of Stanfield?"

Whether Gilbert had or not, he affirmed that he had; and a few moments later the old man sank into a soothed slumber.

When Gilbert found himself really going out of his way to look after old Stanfield, the humour of the situation began to strike him; and generous actions being somewhat rare with him, he began to feel a little ashamed of himself. Nothing could have tended to more greatly embarrass him than to have his kindliness to the old man made known. When in Brussels, where they remained several days, owing to the feeble condition of Stanfield, he met some friends. He was in as mortal terror as if he were afraid of the discovery of some mean action that they should find out his humble friend. To interest himself actively in another's welfare, and put himself to inconvenience on another's behalf, was certainly rather out of keeping with the tenour of his life.

But there was a certain pathetic loneliness in old Stanfield which had touched that particular sentiment in Gilbert which few people ever succeeded in doing. Added to which he had a certain languid curiosity in seeing the finale of the little affair in which he was playing a part; and at times there rose within his breast a certain uneasy foreboding as to whether there might not be disappointment in store for the old man. And lastly, no man with a drop of human blood in his veins could be insensible to the clinging affection which seemed to be growing up in the lonely old man for himself. True, Gilbert knew it was soon to be transferred, with a thousand times more force, to the adored Jenny; but for the present it was pleasant even to a man like Lanford, who professed to despise the softer emotions.

Once he asked Stanfield, who was just recovering from one of his painful heart attacks, whether it would not be better to fetch Miss Stanfield to Brussels; but the old man had an incorrigible objection to appearing before his daughter as an invalid.

"It would not do," he said a little excitedly, "for her to think she would have to nurse her father. It is I who will protect and take care of my Jenny."

And for the thousandth time he would describe the meeting, her features, which must be like her mother's—"the most beautiful woman in the county, sir"—to all of which Lanford would listen patiently, with a little feeling of surprise at the intensity of the old man's love, and an irrepressible sigh of regret that no father or mother had ever felt this for him.

In a few days Mr. Stanfield was so much better that he was able to resume his journey; and Gilbert, feeling he would be somewhat de trop, in Jenny's eyes at least, parted with him, promising to visit Dresden a week later, before the Stanfields left for London. Lanford then pursued his journey to Homburg; and as the softer emotions appeared to have departed with old Stanfield, and he resumed his ordinary semi-cynical, semi-bitter attitude towards life and men, he is not a pleasant companion, although he is too well-bred to evince these characteristics in an unpleasant manner. He carried away with him the impression of the old man's beautiful face—a little worn and wistful, but radiantly joyful and satisfied in the coming re-union.

III.

A WEEK later, after an unsatisfactory time, Gilbert arrived at Dresden. Thanks to his aristocratic bearing and manner, he always received prompt attention, no matter how other Englishmen fared; and ten minutes after his arrival in Dresden his luggage and he himself were deposited in the same hotel as the Stanfields; and his handsome pale face and good clothes having made an impression, as usual, on the softer sex, he was within half-an-hour provided with the best dinner Dresden could boast. Having finally dined, smoked and, to the surprise of the natives, had a bath, he requested the waiter to take up his card to Mr. Stanfield. The man returned, saying Mr. Stanfield was ill in bed, but if Mr. Lanford would be good enough to come up, he would be greatly pleased to see him.

Gilbert, with the memory of the old man's radiant brightness a week ago, was shocked at the change for the worse in his appearance. That look of renewed if fictitious youth had absolutely disappeared; and the furrowed lines, mementos of years of trouble and suffering, now stood out more clearly than ever, marking also the extreme delicacy and purity of the marble face. Old Stanfield was sitting propped up with pillows; and there were evidences of feminine attentions in the delicate arrangements round his bedside, especially evinced in a dish of roses at his side.

His blue eyes brightened as Gilbert approached the bed, and he stretched out his beautiful attenuated hand with a feverish pleasure, and busied himself with the nervous anxiety of sick elderly persons to make room for Gilbert to sit.

In the midst of this there was a slight and gentle rustle, and Miss Stanfield, with a glass of something in her hand, stood at her father's bedside.

"This is Mr. Lanford, Jenny, my dear, the gentleman of whom I spoke to you—my daughter, Mr Lanford," and the old man sank back exhausted.

Gilbert was vaguely conscious that there was something wrong. Where was all the pride and joy of the tone in which he had last spoken of his beloved Jenny? He glanced at the girl in something

like anger. She was a beautiful young creature, and curiously enough, in her eyes, which were long and dark, and quite unlike her father's in colour and shape, there was the same expression of wistful appeal. Gilbert could not fail to notice the air of restraint with which she ministered to her father, and, although he was not prone to rash judgments, the thought, "rather heartless," rose within him. Both men followed her slight figure and gracious face with pleasure; but in the father's glance there was an indefinable kind of sad disappointment.

Miss Stanfield turning round a little suddenly caught her father's expression, and with a slight accession of colour walked to the bedside and kissed the old man, who lay very serene.

He received his daughter's caress rather passively, and inquired absently whether Dr. Schweitz had called whilst he was asleep.

"No, dear—don't you remember we said we would only send for him if you were not so well? You don't feel worse, do you?"

"No, not worse. Jenny, my dear, you look pale; had you not better go for a turn?"

"Yes, dear," and the daughter gave a little sigh. "I suppose there is nothing I can do for you?"

Some impulse caused her to bend down again and press her lips to the pallid, sunken cheeks—and then she disappeared.

Gilbert sat by the bedside for a few moments in painful silence. He scarcely knew how to commence conversation on any safe subject. At last he made a few trivial remarks about his own trip, and seeing the old man sinking into a doze, prepared to leave the room, with the intention of interviewing the doctor.

The loosening grasp of his fingers roused the old man, who had been only lost in memories, and not asleep.

His blue eyes, a little dim, but sweet and placid as ever, fixed themselves on Gilbert's dark, melancholy face, and he murmured gently:

"You understand—it was not what I expected? It is just the crowning disappointment. Why could I not have a little joy before the grave? I wish—" he tried weakly to control his quiet sobs—"I wish I had died on board. I might have known—it has always been the same all through."

In his agitation he raised himself into a sitting position, and drooped his weary head on to Gilbert's shoulder.

For a few moments there was calm stillness, and Gilbert, looking down on his flushed, worn face, and hearing his heavy breathing, hoped he would sleep.

Presently he raised his head with an irritable sigh, and said, sadly: "If only anyone had ever loved me; I did so want to be loved. I could not help it—there seemed to be a sort of yearning here"—placing his hand on his heart—"which never was satisfied. First her—then the boys—and now—oh, Jenny, if you only *could* have loved me. Ah, me!—well, it is nearly over now, and"—with a

weary sigh—"I am not sorry. I hope"—he took Gilbert's hand in his own trembling ones, and looked into his impassive face—"your life, which is just beginning, will be different from mine; do not expect too much; above all, do not expect too much love."

He paused for a second, and Gilbert noticing his weakness suggested he should try and sleep, but the old man went on murmuring with a tender inflection in his voice, and his tired blue eyes wandering about the room: "You must not think Jenny was to blame; it was not her fault that she had no love for her father; but, alas, it seems everything has gone wrong."

Gilbert determined not to let him talk any more, and, after giving him some medicine, said: "I must go now, but would you like me to come up again later?"

Stanfield's worn features lighted up, and he pressed the young man's hand, saying, "I am so tired."

Gilbert went down the stairs more sorry and grieved for the old man than he could have believed it possible. He had no sooner reached the gardens than a feminine figure approached him, and Miss Stanfield said, with a deprecating, yet anxious air:

"Do you think papa so very ill?—Oh, I am sorry about it all."

She paused, and then went on speaking very rapidly and with a sort of girlish excitement, as if she were trying hard not to cry:

"You see, I had not seen papa since I was a baby, and of course I could not feel any deep love for him. If your father is a complete stranger to you, it is not likely you can look upon him as other girls do their fathers. Yet I have longed to see him, but somehow it was always put off and off, and lately, since I knew I was going to see him, I could only feel excitement and curiosity, and I never thought, I never imagined, he was thinking so much of me. Then when we met, he was so hurt and wounded, when he found that I ——"

She stopped short and Gilbert saw her beautiful eyes were heavy with tears. For one selfish moment he wished he were out of the way of all these emotions; the next he was telling her of the old man's hopes and the past, with its disappointment and sorrows. He could not help admitting that there really was a good deal of justice in what the girl said; but along with this came a strong sense of the father's vivid disappointment and destruction of his edifice of joy. It was this that impelled him to speak, although he would much rather have been silent. His manner was extremely diffident and unassuming.

"Of course I understand you could not feel what he does; he forgets that, unfortunate as it is, he has never come into your life at all; but I should think that it would be well to practise a little mild deception, and be as demonstratively affectionate as you can. I should say he was the sort of man very much in need of outward affection."

There was a certain delicacy about his tone and words very

pleasing to the young girl, who was exceedingly susceptible to outside influences. She turned her lovely face with its pale curves and deep, wistful eyes upon him, and said, regretfully:

"Oh, I ought to have thought about this—but you do not know what it is not to have any of your really own people. Of course my grandmother was very kind, and I am fond of my uncles; but"—she shrugged her fair shoulders—"they would have strongly objected to the display of any affectionate emotions. Poor dear papa—oh, Mr. Lanford, somehow I never realised till this moment what a terribly lonely life he must have had. But I will be good to him. I'll just live for him—I am so grateful to you for having been so kind and attentive to him. I must go and pet him a little—I'm determined he shall be happy at last."

Gilbert smiled at her impetuosity, and was a little surprised at the brightness of her face, which a few moments before he had thought exquisitely lovely but a trifle sad and unhappy. Years afterwards, when he had learnt to know it and love it as life's best treasure, he could accurately recall it at that moment. He followed her leisurely, thinking it would be best for her to meet her father alone. At the threshold he paused. There was a low, helpless cry, and the next moment he had entered, in time to catch Jenny's swaying form in his arms and to hear that most hopeless of all human expressions:

"Too late!"

But the old man lay, unheedful of his beloved Jenny's tears, in that calm stillness which no buffetings or storms can break.

FRANCES H. LOW.

STAR WORSHIP.

A FAIR-HAIRED child, with steadfast, dark-fringed eyes,
And dainty limbs that moved with supple grace,
Her evening prayer just ended, with a smile
And coaxing words, looked in her mother's face:
"Nay, mother, leave the curtains for to-night—
At least, till I'm asleep; for don't you see,
Right up amidst the blue, a tiny star?
I love it, and I think it smiles at me."

Years after, in a mansion further south,
Moved a pale woman with soft, tender eyes,
And just that quiet droop about the mouth
Wherein so much of life's sad pathos lies.
Both wealth and rank had wooed her; but to all
She answered "Nay," with such soft, sweet address,
Not one in sorrow as they turned away
But prayed "God bless her" for her graciousness.
'Twas said of her by one both true and good,
Whose name was counted great amongst his kind:
"She is the purest type of womanhood
Heart could desire, or wisdom hope to find.
Yet lacks she one thing—(As a faithful friend,
How true and loyal she can be all own)—
Add tender *Wife* and *Mother*, then indeed
Grace unto grace is added, crown to crown."

Years after, in a city's vast hotel,
This man lay sick to death: strange hands to tend,
All alien faces watching where he lay,
Unknown, unknowing, and without a friend;
Then, with a grave, calm look about the mouth,
But prayer to God to check her heart's wild beat,
She with soft step into that darkened room
Came like a sunbeam from the narrow street.
And so she nursed him, all unconscious, till
The tired eyes ope'd and looked at her one day:
One long glad look ere heart and pulse grew still,
And death had closed the weary lids for aye.
And tho' her faith had taught her for the dead
(Our nearest and our dearest) prayers are vain:
Yet ever, when "Our Father" had been said,
"God bless him" on the Amen softly came.
Until God's angel, with a pitying touch,
Sealed the sad lips ere those three words were o'er;
And one "God bless ——" was ended face to face,
Hand clasped in hand upon a love-lit shore;
While darker grew the chamber; for death's wing
In silent majesty filled all the place,
Save where a curtain parted, and a star
Looked down in sorrow on the poor dead face.

IT WAS A STRANGE MEETING THE TWO SISTERS CAME TOGETHER IN THAT UNEXPECTED MA

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1890.

THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PHYSICIAN AND HIS WIFE.

SPRING was succeeding to a certain long and sharp winter; but the mornings and evenings were dreary, and the east wind which prevailed penetrated to the very warmest house in Wexborough—a fashionable town for invalids, noted all over England for its salubrity. That east wind had struck inflammation to the chest of a lovely child, and was quickly carrying it away. It lay on its mother's knee before the fire. She, the mother, was young and very pretty, but delicate and careworn. Her whole heart was wound up in this child, and she would not believe but that it was recovering.

"Don't you think it looks a little better than it did this morning?" she anxiously asked, raising her eyes to her husband, who had come in and was standing near.

He made an evasive reply, for he was a physician, and he knew that the child was dying. At that moment there was a knock at the front door, and they heard the maid show the visitor into the consulting-room. Their only servant, for they were very poor, the physician trying to struggle into practice.

"It's Mr. Fairfax, sir," she said, entering the room.

Now Mr. Fairfax was Dr. Elliot's landlord, and the physician, for certain reasons, would rather have had a visit from any man, living or dead, than from him. He broke out into an impatient word, and demanded sharply of the girl why she admitted *him*. She was beginning an explanation, but he would not stop to hear it.

"Well, Doctor," began Mr. Fairfax, who owned no end of property in Wexborough, "I am not come upon my usual visit, and that I told your girl, for I saw she was preparing the old answer. You know that house of mine in the Crescent, which was to be let furnished?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is let, and the people have arrived to-day. A lady and gentleman and several servants—plenty of money there seems to be there. The gentleman appears in bad health, and they asked me to recommend a physician. So I mentioned you."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Dr. Elliot, with animation.

"Yes, but, Doctor, we don't do anything for nothing in this world. I shall expect part of your fees to be handed to me for back rent. Without my recommendation, you would never have got in there, for I need not remind you that there are physicians in Wexborough older established and more popular than you. Out of every guinea you must give me half. Is it a bargain?"

"It is," answered Dr. Elliot. "Honour bright."

"Then put on your hat, and go up at once. They want to see you to-night. Number nine."

Dr. Elliot soon reached the Crescent. His patient was seated in a room alone. One leg, cased in flannel, was raised on a foot-rest. Glasses and dessert were on the table, though more from custom than for use. Dr. Elliot's card had preceded him, and the servant had placed a chair.

"They have brought me here for a change of air," he said to Dr. Elliot, after speaking of his illness; "but I have little faith, myself, in any change being beneficial. Such a complication of disorders! And now this attack of gout, worse than any I ever had. I am a young man to have gout, Doctor, but it is hereditary in my family."

"Yes," replied Dr. Elliot. "You have perhaps—excuse me, but I ought to know all your case—been a free liver?"

"Pretty well for that: though not more so than other country gentlemen addicted to field sports, and latterly I have been obliged to be abstemious."

When Dr. Elliot was writing the prescription it occurred to him that Mr. Fairfax had not mentioned the name, so he asked it now. Turnberry, he thought was the reply, but his patient was taken with a fit of coughing at the moment. He wrote it "——Turnberry, Esquire." As he was leaving the house, a servant came up and said his mistress wished to see him before he went.

The lady stood in the drawing-room when Dr. Elliot entered, the rays of the chandelier falling upon her. He was struck with amazement at her beauty. A tall, stately woman of eight-and-twenty, her eyes haughty, her complexion brilliant, her features of exquisite contour.

She began to speak; he began to speak; but neither finished. Both stood, awed to silence, for they had recognised each other, and to neither was the recognition palatable. It was Mrs. Turnbull, not Turnberry, and Dr. Elliot saw in her the sister of his wife, once Clara Freer. *She* saw in him the handsome, harum-scarum young medical student, Tom Elliot, whom she had admired, if not loved, ere he had declared his preference for her sister. That was eight years ago, and

no communication had been held between the families since. Tom Elliot's friends had helped him while he finished his studies, obtained his diploma, and became Dr. Elliot. Since then, he had set up at Wexborough, and had been living on, he hardly knew how, waiting for practice: his wife would have said, struggling on.

Dr. Elliot held out his hand to Mrs. Turnbull. "May I hope that the lapse of time has softened your feelings towards me?" he said, in low, persuasive tones—and none knew how to speak more persuasively than he. "Now that we have been brought together in this strange way, let me implore a reconciliation—for Louisa's sake."

Mrs. Turnbull, after a moment's hesitation, put her hand into his. "For Louisa's sake," she repeated. "Are you living in Wexborough? Have you a flourishing practice?"

"Not flourishing. Practice comes slowly to beginners."

"How is Louisa? Is she much altered?"

"Very much, I think. The loss of her children has had a great effect upon her."

"Ah! you have children, then?" And old jealous feeling of bygone days came over Mrs. Turnbull. She had had none.

"Yes, we have been unfortunate in them all, save the eldest. I have left one at home now in Louisa's arms, dying."

Mrs. Turnbull was shocked, and a better feeling returned to her. "I should like to see Louisa," she exclaimed. "Suppose I go now?"

"Now!" cried Dr. Elliot, in dismayed tones, as he thought of the inward signs of poverty in his house, and its disordered appearance just then. "But we are all at sixes and sevens to-night, with this dying child."

"Oh, I can allow for that: I know what illness is. I have seen enough of it since I married Squire Turnbull. Wait one moment, and I will go with you."

She had possessed a will of her own as Clara Freer, and she had not parted with it as Mrs. Turnbull. She called for her bonnet and cloak, and then went into the dining-room to her husband. He looked surprised, as well he might, to see her going out at the dusk of evening, in a strange town.

"Did you recognise him?" she said, leaning over her husband's chair.

"Recognise him!" repeated Squire Turnbull, not understanding. "He is a clever man, I think; seems to know what he is about. Young, though. His name is"—running his eyes over the card—"Elliot. 'Dr. Elliot.'"

"He is metamorphosed into Doctor now. He was Tom Elliot when he ran away with Louisa."

"By jingo! it's never that Tom Elliot!" uttered the astonished Squire. "Is *he* Louisa's husband? Well, it did strike me that I had seen his face before."

"He is Louisa's husband, and she is in trouble, he says. A child

of theirs is dying—now—to-night—as I understand. I fancy, too, they are in poverty," she added, "which of course was only to be expected, acting as they did. But he asked me to let bygones be bygones, for Louisa's sake, and I am going to see her."

"Bygones! of course let them be bygones," cried the warm-hearted Squire; "why not? I have always blamed your father for holding out about it. It was done, and couldn't be helped; and the only remedy left was to make the best of it. A dying child! poverty! I say, Clara, don't forget that we have abundance of everything, money included. Let your hand be open, wife, if wanted. Poor Loo!"

She went out, leaving the Squire to his reflections. They carried him back, naturally to that old time, eight years ago. He had admired Louisa Freer then, and wished to marry her, but Mr. Tom Elliot forestalled him. He had then, after some delay, transferred his proposals to the elder sister, and they were accepted. To be mistress of Turnbull Park, and two thousand a-year, was a position any lawyer's daughter might covet. Clara did, and gained it.

It was a strange meeting, the two sisters coming together, in that unexpected manner, after so many years of estrangement. Oh! the contrast between them! Mrs. Elliot pale, haggard, unhappy, her gown a faded merino, and her hair little cared for: Clara, who had thrown off her mantle, in an evening dress of black velvet, its low body and sleeves trimmed with rich white lace, and gold ornaments decorating her neck, her arms and her luxuriant hair! More beautiful she was, more beautiful altogether, than of yore.

There arose now, from a stool at his mother's feet, a lovely boy of seven years old; tall, healthy and straight as a dart. He fixed his large brown eyes on the stranger's face; but he was not dressed very well, and Dr. Elliot, muttering something about "William's bed-time," took him out of the room.

"What a noble boy!" involuntarily exclaimed Mrs. Turnbull, gazing after him; "what an intelligent countenance! He is your eldest, I presume, and this was your youngest."

Was! She unconsciously spoke of the infant in the past tense, for she had noticed its ghastly face and laboured breathing. Very, very fast was its life ebbing now.

"How many children have you?" inquired Mrs. Elliot.

"None." And there was something in the tone of the short answer which told the subject was a sore one.

"You are well off," vehemently spoke Mrs. Elliot. "Better never have them than have them only to lose them. William was born within the first year of our marriage, and then for nearly three years I had no more children. I did so wish for a girl—as did my husband. How I longed for it I cannot tell you. The passionate appeal of Rachel I understood then—'Give me children, or else I die.' Well, a girl was born; but born to die: then another was born; but born

to die: now this one, who has stayed longer with me than they, for she is fourteen months old; now this one is about to die! You are well off."

"Is Dr. Elliot a good husband to you?" questioned Mrs. Turnbull.

"He is a kind husband—yes—generally speaking," was the reply of Mrs. Elliot, while a vivid blush dyed her pale cheek. "But he is fond of pleasure—not altogether what may be called a domestic husband. And now, Clara, dare I ask you of my father? Two years ago I heard that he was living, and I see you are not in mourning."

"He is well and hearty. As full of business as ever."

"Does he ever," hesitated Mrs. Elliot, "speak of forgiving me?"

"He has never mentioned you, never once. He was dreadfully incensed at the step you took. And when offended, it is so hard for him to forgive. You must remember that, Louisa."

"I wrote to him when Willy was born. And again when I lost my first little girl."

"Indeed!" cried Mrs. Turnbull. "He never told me. What was the result?"

"Both times the same. He returned the letters in a blank cover. It is not that I want assistance from him, but I should like forgiveness."

"But some assistance would not be unwelcome, I presume."

"Oh, we can manage to get along. I suppose it is only right that straitened circumstances should follow such a marriage as ours. If I craved help for anything, it would be for the boy. He is a most intelligent child—as you saw by his eyes and countenance—can read as well as I can. But it is time his education was begun in earnest."

"Will you give him to me?" eagerly asked Mrs. Turnbull. "I will adopt him and do by him as if he were my own. Unless I am mistaken, you are shortly in expectation of another infant."

"It is so," answered Mrs. Elliot. "Night and day, since there has been a fear of losing this one, have I prayed it might be a girl."

"Then you can spare me the boy. Talk it over with Dr. Elliot. It is only to lend him, you know, Louisa; and remember, the advantages to him will be great."

Mrs. Elliot did talk over with her husband Mrs. Turnbull's offer, and they were both of opinion that one so desirable should not be refused. Therefore, when Mr. and Mrs. Turnbull departed for Turnbull Park, William Elliot accompanied them. The little girl had died.

The following year they returned to Wexborough. Dr. and Mrs. Elliot were progressing but little better: practice was very slow in coming to him. They hardly knew William: he was wonderfully improved. Dressed in costly habits, accustomed now to luxury, servants, a pony at his command, and his education pressed on, it was indeed an alteration for him. But his sweet disposition had not

changed, and he met his parents with a burst of emotion that astonished them. He came every day to see them, but his home was still with Mrs. Turnbull.

Not long had Mr. and Mrs. Turnbull been at Wexborough this second time before a disagreeable feeling which during their former visit had stolen like a shadow over Mrs. Elliot's heart, rose again. Like a shadow, indeed, for she would not *allow* herself to notice it then, and with their departure had dismissed it from her thoughts, never, she sincerely hoped, to recall it. Yet now it was forcing itself upon her with redoubled vigour—the suspicion that her husband admired, not in too sisterly a way, Mrs. Turnbull; that there was too good an understanding between them. Not that Mrs. Elliot feared anything like guilt. Oh, no. Whatever opinion she may have formed, or had cause to form, of her husband's laxity of morals during their married life, she was perfectly secure in her sister's principles; but that an undue attachment for each other's society had grown up was very plain. On Mrs. Turnbull's part it was probably nothing beyond gratified vanity; but Louisa had never forgotten how Clara had once confessed to something very like love for Tom Elliot. Louisa had then thought that his love and his admiration were given to none but herself; she now knew that at least his admiration was given to every handsome woman who came in his way. Few had he fallen in with so beautiful as Mrs. Turnbull; he was at no pains to conceal his sense of it, and she repulsed not the marked attentions of the very handsome physician. But all this was disagreeable to Mrs. Elliot, and as the weeks of the Turnbulls' second sojourn at Wexborough lengthened into months, and her husband passed more and more of his time with Mrs. Turnbull, it jarred not only on her feelings, but on her temper. Existence seemed to possess for her but two phases: passionate love for her little baby-girl and jealousy of her husband and sister. Never yet had she breathed a word of this unpleasantness to Dr. Elliot, but she was naturally of a hasty spirit, and the explosion was sure to come.

One afternoon, as she stood at her window, holding her babe, she saw her sister and William coming down the street. Then she saw her husband meet them, draw Mrs. Turnbull's arm within his, and lead her in. William came running up to the sitting-room.

"Where is your aunt, Willy?" she said as she stooped to kiss him.

"She is gone with papa into his consulting-room. Mamma, who do you think is come to Uncle Turnbull's?"

Mrs. Elliot did not heed him: she was listening for any sound from downstairs, jealously tormenting herself with conjectures of what they might be doing; what talking about. Mrs. Turnbull came up shortly.

"I have had the greatest surprise to-day, Louisa," she exclaimed. "Who do you think came by the mid-day coach?"

Mrs. Elliot answered coldly—that she was not likely to guess.

"Papa."

"Papa!" repeated Mrs. Elliot, aroused from her brooding thoughts.

"Papa. I never was more surprised. We were at luncheon. The servant—it happened to be the new one who was in waiting—said a gentleman wanted to see me, and in walked my father. It seems he was at Wexborough, on business for one of his clients, and being so near, ran over here this morning. But he leaves to-morrow by the early coach, and is now gone to the Royal Arms to secure a bed. I could not persuade him to sleep at our house; he said he should disturb us in the morning."

"Did Willy see him?" sighed Mrs. Elliot.

"Yes. But papa took little notice of him: he never does when he sees him at the Park. I am going to leave Willy with you for the afternoon, for his presence always seems to cast a restraint on my father. I wish you would give me a glass of wine, Louisa," added Mrs. Turnbull. "I am thirsty."

Mrs. Elliot laid down her infant, and brought forth a decanter of port wine. It was the same as that in Mrs. Turnbull's own cellar, Squire Turnbull having sent in a present of some to Mrs. Elliot.

"I am thirsty too," said William. "Let me have a glass, mamma."

"Wine for you!" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot; "no, indeed, Willy. When little boys are thirsty, they drink water."

"What nonsense!" interposed Mrs. Turnbull. "Give the child some wine, Louisa. It is the fish-sauce we had at luncheon, no doubt, that is making us thirsty."

A half-dispute ensued, carried on good-humouredly by Mrs. Turnbull, with bitterness by her sister. The latter handed William a tumbler of water: Mrs. Turnbull ordered him not to drink it till his mamma put some wine in it, and William Elliot, a sensitive child, stood in discomfort, his cheeks crimson, and whispering that he was not thirsty then. Dr. Elliot came in.

"Did you ever know anything like Louisa's absurdity to-day?" Mrs. Turnbull said to him. "Willy is dying with thirst: I say put a little drop of wine into that water, instead of letting him drink it cold, and she won't give him wine."

"He shall not have wine," repeated Mrs. Elliot, with acrimony. "It is improper for him."

"Nonsense!" muttered Dr. Elliot, and poured some wine into the water, ordering William to drink it. His wife's face and lips turned of a deadly whiteness; with her, the sign of extreme anger. She caught up her babe and left the room.

"I must be going, Louisa," called out Mrs. Turnbull. "My father will have returned from the hotel. Good-bye."

She went downstairs, followed by Dr. Elliot, and Mrs. Elliot saw them walking slowly up the street together. She was boiling over with wrath and indignation.

Willy stole towards her, his little face a picture of sorrow as he timidly strove to utter some words. "Mamma, dearest mamma!" he

whispered, bursting into a flood of tears, "I am so sorry I asked for the wine! I did not know you wished me not to have it. I will not ask for any again."

She drew him to her, kissed him passionately, and sobbed with him. But she made no comment to the child.

CHAPTER XV.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

Dr. Elliot did not return to tea; not, in fact, until it was time to take William home; and then came the explosion. The physician took it with provoking coolness, began to whistle, and asked whether the boy was ready.

"He never goes back again," said Mrs. Elliot. "His bed is made up at home."

"There is no reason for the lad's interests to suffer because your temper has turned crusty this evening," observed Dr. Elliot. "He shall certainly go back to Squire Turnbull's."

"When a woman can incite a child to disobey his mother, she is no longer fitting to hold control over him. Mrs. Turnbull shall have no more control over mine."

"Was it worth while to make a fuss over such a trifle? As if a drop of wine would hurt the boy! Remember the obligations he is under to Mrs. Turnbull."

"Remember your obligations to me, your wife. I have borne much, Thomas, since we married, but I will not be domineered over by you both conjointly, or tamely see your love given to her."

"Tamely!—love!" uttered Dr. Elliot. "What nonsense now, Louisa?"

"Do you think I am blind?" she retorted; "do you think I am a stone, destitute of feeling? Is it not too apparent that all your thoughts, your time, your wishes are given to Mrs. Turnbull?"

"Oh, if you are going to begin on the old score of jealousy, I have nothing more to say," observed Dr. Elliot, carelessly; "but I think you might exempt your own sister from such suspicions. Harriet!" he called out, throwing open the room door, "put on Master William's things, and send him down."

"I say the child shall not go back," passionately uttered Mrs. Elliot.

"And I say he shall. When you have calmed down to common-sense, Louisa, you will see the folly of sacrificing his advantages of education to your fancies, which are as capricious as they are unjust."

"I will apply to the law—I will apply to the nearest magistrate, rather than have my child forcibly disposed of against my will," she vehemently continued.

"My dear, the law is not on your side, but on mine. A father's authority does not yield to magistrates," laughed Dr. Elliot. To preserve that nonchalant good humour was, in her present mood, as fuel heaped on fire. She would rather he had struck her.

And the matter ended by his taking William back to Mrs. Turnbull's.

"Loo's furiously savage," he thought to himself as he went. "But she should not take such crochets into her head."

Mrs. Elliot certainly was "savage" as she sat alone that long evening. Things wore to her jaundiced mind a worse appearance than they really deserved. Her husband was magnified into a sort of demon Don Juan; her sister into a beautiful siren, who lived but to attract him, and rule over her. "Oh! the blind child I was to fly in the face of my friends, and run away with Tom Elliot!" she bitterly exclaimed. "I suppose the act is working out its own punishment; for what a life is mine! Struggling with poverty—losing my idolised children—spurned by my father—neglected by my husband—patronised by my sister, and compelled to yield my boy to her charge! His education—there it is. It ought to go on, yet we have not the means to pursue it; and never shall have, it seems to me."

"Why not ask my father?" The question came from her own heart, but with a sudden intensity that startled her to believe one must be at her elbow who had whispered it. "Why not go to him now, this very moment, at the hotel, and press it on him?"

Mrs. Elliot was in that excited state that sways to action. Calling the maid to sit upstairs, lest the child should cry, she put on her things and went out.

The Royal Arms was not far off: a handsome hotel, with a flight of steps, and a blazing gas-lamp at its entrance. She turned her face away from its light. It was striking ten as she ascended to the door. The landlord himself happened to be crossing the passage.

"Is a gentleman of the name of Freer stopping here?" inquired Mrs. Elliot.

"Freer? No, ma'am."

"A friend of Mr. Turnbull's in the Crescent," she explained. "He came this afternoon and engaged a bed-room."

"Oh, that gentleman—I did not know his name. Wears a bag-wig, ma'am."

"The same."

"He has not come in yet."

But as they stood there, someone else came up the steps, and passed without notice: an old gentleman in a bag-wig. The landlord was pressing forward to mention the lady, but she clasped his arm to detain him.

"Not here, in this public passage," she whispered, shrinking into a

corner. "I will follow to his bedroom. I am his daughter. There has been a difference between us, and we have not met for years. If you have children you can feel for me."

The landlord looked at her compassionately, at her pale face and visible emotion. He stood before her till Mr. Freer had received his candle from the hands of the waiter, and had gone upstairs.

He was winding up his watch when Mrs. Elliot entered. She closed the door and stood before him. He turned round in surprise, but he did not recognise her in the dim light. Her agitation was great, she became hysterical, and fell forward at his feet.

"Oh, father! forgive, forgive me!" she sobbed out. Mr. Freer started from her, almost in affright.

"Louisa!—Elliot! you! What brings you here?" The christian name had arisen involuntarily to his lips. He seemed to add the other by way of counteracting his familiarity.

"Sorrow brings me here—misery brings me. Father, I cannot live without your forgiveness. I think you must have cursed me, and that the curse is still clinging to us, for nothing has prospered with me since I left your home."

"I have not cursed you," he said, still standing aloof from her.

"Will you accord me your forgiveness?" she continued to ask.

"Yes; if you can be satisfied with the letter and not the spirit."

She looked at him inquiringly, her lips parted, her thin white hands raised in supplication.

"If to say that I forgive you will avail, that forgiveness you may take," he said, answering her look. "But when you cast me off to become the wife of Thomas Elliot, you put a bar to all future intercourse between us."

"Your full and free forgiveness," she continued to implore.

"My free forgiveness," he repeated, "but not my friendship. You have your husband's."

"He has not been to me the husband I expected—hoped for," she cried, saying more than she would have said but for the jealous, angry feeling that was rife within her, so especially on that night.

The lawyer smiled, a grim smile. "Few wives, when they marry as you did, do find their husbands what they expected."

She looked earnestly at him. She had risen, and stood before him, her hands clasped still. "Oh, father, father, that I had never left your home!" she wailed. "At times I say to myself, 'Let me cheat my memory, and persuade it that all these years have been a dream—that I shall awake and find myself little Louisa Freer!'"

"Ah," returned the lawyer; "many a one would give their lives to awake from the same dream."

"It is not visited on him as it is on me," she added, her cheeks flushing. "Hour after hour, while I am sitting alone, brooding over the past, striving to stave off present annoyances, he spends away from me, seeking only how he may amuse himself."

"Nothing else could be expected from a man of the disposition of Thomas Elliot but that he would seek his own amusement, married or single. I could have told you that years ago."

"I know you never liked him, papa, but will you not be reconciled to him?"

"Never," vehemently uttered Lawyer Freer. "We will not speak upon the subject."

"I came here to urge another plea," she sadly added, after an interval of silence. "To ask you to help me; we are very poor."

"It is waste of time," was the stern reiteration of Lawyer Freer. "Thomas Elliot has no help from me, before my death or after it."

"It is not for him," she eagerly rejoined, her eyes glistening with excitement. "Father, I declare to you that I ask for it but to thwart my husband, not to assist him. You have seen a child of mine at Mrs. Turnbull's?"

"I have seen a child there," he coldly answered. "I believe my daughter once mentioned that it was yours."

My daughter! Well, she deserved it.

"It is my only boy: the rest were girls, and they have all died, save one. Father, I named him William, after you."

"I had been better pleased that you had named him any other name to associate with that of Elliot," was the disheartening answer.

"It is for him that I need assistance," she resumed. "I want to place him at school. Oh, sir! if you knew all, perhaps you would aid me to do it."

"What mistaken notion are you labouring under?" returned Mr. Freer. "Help a child of Thomas Elliot's! Has he been sending you on this strange errand?"

"He does not know I am come. He was absent when I stole out of my home to ask this. It would be against his will if the boy is placed at school, for he wishes him to remain with Mrs. Turnbull. Do you remember, father, how Clara used to tyrannise over me at home—how she used to put upon me?"

"It may possibly have been the case. She was older than you."

"Sir, you knew she did, though you may not care to recall it. But she does still, and surely she is not justified. I have not a will of my own, especially as regards the boy; every wish I express she opposes, and Dr. Elliot upholds her. I could bear this," passionately went on Mrs. Elliot, disclosing what she would have shrunk from doing in a calmer moment—"I could bear her encouraging the child in disobedience, but what I cannot bear is that she should draw my husband's affections away from me."

"I do not understand," replied Mr. Freer.

"Because you do not know Clara," said Mrs. Elliot. "She was as fond of Tom Elliot as I was, in those old days, but she had more worldly prudence. Who first encouraged him to our house?—she did.

Who flirted with, and attracted him?—she did. And when the truth came out, that he loved me, she betrayed the tale to you in her jealous anger. Then came forward Squire Turnbull. I was a young, frightened child, and I did not dare to object to him; so, to escape, I rushed upon a worse course."

Lawyer Freer was knitting his brows. Parts of her speech had grated on his ear.

"She never forgave me from the morning she knew Tom Elliot cared for me and not for her: she has never forgiven me yet. And now they have learnt to care for each other; the time, the attentions, the love my husband owes me are given to her. Believe me or not as you please, sir, it is the disgraceful truth."

"Disgraceful, degenerate girls, both of you," he exclaimed, angrily, "to be led away by a man like him!"

"So I come to you for aid," she continued; "and I have explained this, not to betray her folly, but to justify my application. If I could place the boy at school, we should no longer be under obligations to Mrs. Turnbull, neither would the child be an excuse for my husband's visits there. You cannot countenance such conduct in my sister."

"I have nothing to do with Mrs. Turnbull's conduct. She is old enough and wise enough to take care of herself, and I do not fear her doing so. And for you—should you ever become a widow, then you may apply to me."

The tears were struggling down Mrs. Elliot's cheeks. She ventured to touch and take her father's hand. "For my peace and William's welfare I implore aid," she said; "not for Dr. Elliot."

Mr. Freer did not withdraw his hand, and he did not return her clasp; he suffered it to remain passively in hers. "You are asking what is not in my power to accord, Louisa," he at length said. "When you left my protection for Thomas Elliot's, I took an oath that he and his should remain strangers to me; that so long as he should live, they should never enjoy aught of mine. As well ask me to break this hand"—and he held it out—"as to break my oath."

"So there goes another of my life's delusions," she uttered, in a tone of anguish—"nearly the last. In my most sad moments a ray of light has flashed across me—a vision of my being reconciled to my father; of his blessing me and my children, a blessing that might have been worked out in life. How could I have expected it? Father, farewell. God bless you, and pity me!"

"Fare you well, Louisa."

He took the candle and followed her to the door, intending to light her down the stairs, but the rays of a lamp hanging outside rendered it unnecessary. He stood there, and when she glanced back, from the end of the corridor, she saw him looking after her.

Yearningly she strained her eyes to his, and her lips moved, and her steps halted. Perhaps she would have flown back to him; she had it in her heart to do so; to fall upon his neck, and, with kisses and sobs, implore a more loving forgiveness; but he turned in and closed the door, even as she looked, and she passed swiftly down the stairs, with a bursting spirit. It was the last time they met on earth.

Nearly the last of her life's delusions, Mrs. Elliot had said. What else remained to her? Her children. William departed, as before, with Mr. and Mrs. Turnbull for Nearfordshire. With the latter's absence, Louisa again forgot her jealous troubles, and peace—rather cold perhaps, but undisturbed by storms—was resumed between herself and her husband. Upon her young child, the girl, every wish and hope seemed now concentred. The love she lavished upon the infant was a matter of remark to all who had an opportunity of witnessing it: *they* loved their children, but not with an all-absorbing passion such as this. Did Mrs. Elliot ever hear that a check, sooner or later, always comes to love so inordinate? She would have known it, had she looked much into the world. "Oh! when my darling can speak, when it can answer me with its dear little voice, I shall be too happy," she was wont to say. "My father has abandoned me, my husband has forgotten his love for me, my noble boy gladdens other eyes than mine, but in this precious child shall lie my recompense. Make haste, my darling; make haste to speak!"

But the child seemed backward in speaking, and in walking also. Fifteen months old, and it attempted neither. Master Willy, at that age, had gone, with his sturdy legs, all over the room, and made himself heard when he wanted bread-and-butter. "Girls are not so forward as boys," reasoned Mrs. Elliot.

It was a pretty child, and would have been more so but for an unusual look about the forehead, and a vacant stare in its full blue eyes. Once or twice that vacant gaze had stricken a chill to the mother's heart, bringing with it a wild fear, a dread, which she drove back as some far-off horror, that would kill her if ever it came near.

One afternoon the servant, Harriet, had the baby lying on her knee. She had just come in from a walk, had taken off its things, and was now looking curiously at its face, and touching its head here and there. Dr. Elliot was stretched on the sofa, reading, as Harriet thought, but his eyes were raised over the book, watching her motions.

"Harriet, what are you looking at?"

The question was sudden, and startled the servant. She replied, in a confused, vague manner, that she was looking at "nothing particular."

Dr. Elliot came forward, drew a chair in front of them, and sat down, gazing first at her, then at the child. "What *were* you

thinking of, Harriet," he persisted, "when you touched the child's forehead?"

Harriet burst into tears. She was very fond of the infant. "I hope you will not ask me, sir," she rejoined; "I should be afraid to tell."

"Afraid of a fiddlestick," returned Dr. Elliot. "If you fancy there is anything the matter with her, speak, and it may be"—he seemed to hesitate for a word—"remedied. Many an infant has been ruined for life through its ailments not being known."

"It was not me, sir," began Harriet, looking round at the door, which was ajar, to make sure her mistress was not there, though indeed she could then hear her overhead in her own room. "It's true I have wondered at the child's being so dull, though I never thought much about it; but this afternoon, as I was sitting on a bench in the promenade walk, old Mrs. Chivers came up—she as goes out nursing."

"I know," said Dr. Elliot. "Well?"

"She had her daughter's child with her, a lively little thing of eleven months. It was stepping about, holding on by our knees, and laughing.

"'That's what your poor little charge won't do on a sudden,' she begins to me.

"'Why not?' says I. 'Little Miss Clara's backward, but she'll be all right when she gets her teeth.'

"'Why, she's got her teeth,' returns Nurse Chivers; 'hasn't she?'

"'Only six,' I said. 'Many a child's more backward in walking than she.'

"'I don't say she won't walk in time,' went on Dame Chivers, 'but you can't have handled that baby for fifteen months, and not have found out what's the matter with it. Folks are talking of it in the town, and saying ——'" Harriet stopped.

"Go on," cried Dr. Elliot, with compressed lips.

"'And saying,' Nurse Chivers continued, 'that the Doctor must know it, if its poor mamma does not. Though the look of the baby might have told her that it is'——I don't like," broke off Harriet, with renewed tears, "to repeat the cruel word she said—though Nurse Chivers was grieved herself, and did not mean it unkindly. But if she's right, the dear baby will never have wit nor sense through life to comfort us."

Tighter, far tighter was the strain upon his lips, and a dark shade of pain marked his handsome face. He bent his head over his child. It lay wide awake, but perfectly passive in Harriet's lap, its lips apart and its glistening eyes staring upwards.

"Oh, sir," sobbed Harriet, "is it true?" And then she saw the expression on the Doctor's countenance, and knew that the news was no news to him. "Whoever will break it to my mistress?" she wailed.

"It must be suffered to come upon her by gradual degrees," was his answer. But had Dr. Elliot raised his eyes, he would have seen that it *had* come upon her, and not by gradual degrees. She had come softly downstairs and inside the room, lest the baby slept, just in time to hear the dreadful sentence; and there she stood, transfixed and rigid, her eyes staring as wildly as the child's. That far-off horror, seen but at a distance, had come near—into her very home. Some instinct caused Harriet to look round; she saw her mistress, and shrieked out. Dr. Elliot raised his head, bounded forward, and caught her in his arms.

"Louisa! Good Heavens! I did not know you were there. My dearest wife! do not distress yourself; all will be well; it is not so bad as these women think. Louisa! Louisa!"

No, no, the dreadful shock had come to her, and nothing could soothe or soften it. When she recovered power of motion, she took the ill-fated child from the servant, laid its cheek against hers, and moaned as she swayed with it backwards and forwards. Suddenly she looked up at her husband—"If we could die—I and she—both of us!" she murmured, in a despairing, helpless sort of way, almost as if her own intellect was going.

It was indeed a fearful visitation, and it made itself heard in throbs of agony. Her brain was beating, her heart was working: care upon care, trouble upon trouble had followed her wilful marriage, and now the last and greatest comfort, the only joy that seemed left to her, had turned into a thing to be dreaded worse than death. She had so passionately wished for this child, and now that it was given, what was it? Her husband sat regarding her in gloomy silence, pitying her—she could see that—pitying the ill-fated child. Oh, if she could but undo her work and her disobedience; if she could but go back years, and be once more careless, happy, dutiful Louisa Freer! Not even Tom Elliot should tempt her away then.

How many, as her father said, have echoed the same useless prayer. Ill-doing first, repentance afterwards; but repentance can rarely, if ever, repair the ill-doing. All must bear the sorrows they bring upon themselves, even though they may end but with life; but it seemed to Louisa Elliot, in that first hour of her full affliction, aye, and for years afterwards, that her punishment was worse than had ever yet fallen upon woman.

CHAPTER XVI.

HALLIWELL HOUSE.

We must return to Halliwell House—a distinct thing from The House of Halliwell. Halliwell House was the title which Hester and Lucy had chosen to bestow upon their new residence when they went into it, and we must see how they were getting on.

It cannot be said that they did not succeed; but they did not succeed sufficiently to pay their expenses, and their little capital was often drawn upon. Their number of pupils fluctuated much: one half-year they would have a tolerably good school, the next it would be small. Many an anxious conversation did they have, many an hour of more anxious thought, many a sleepless night. To sink into debt and difficulty; to spend the last shilling of their capital in striving to avert it, to find their efforts fruitless, their money gone, and they turned from their present shelter, from their slender means of living, without any definite prospect of finding another—these were the fears and the visions that disturbed their rest continually. Oh, God! pity and aid all who are struggling, as they were, to keep up appearances and earn a respectable living, and who find their means and their hopes grow less and less day by day!

"I have a scheme running in my head," Lucy said one evening: "suppose we let lodgings?"

"Let lodgings!" exclaimed Hester.

"The drawing-room and one or two bed-rooms. We can give up our own and go upstairs, and there's the one we fitted up for that parlour-boarder. Why not?"

"But it will not do to let lodgings in a ladies' school," returned Hester. "Such a thing was never heard of. All the parents would object to it."

"Most of them would never know it," said Lucy. "It cannot be any possible detriment to the pupils—can make no difference to them whatever. We might easily get thirty shillings a week for the three rooms, be at no outlay, and, if we had quiet people, it would be very little trouble."

"Thirty shillings a week!" repeated Hester. "It would go far towards the rent. I will sleep upon it, Lucy."

She did so. And the next day had some cards written in text-hand, intimating that two ladies wished to let a part of their house, and gave them to the stationers to display in their shops, for of course they could not exhibit such an announcement in their own windows.

The cards were out three weeks, and not a soul applied. But one day, Sarah, the servant, went to the school-room, and beckoned to her mistress.

"It's some folks after the rooms, ma'am," she whispered. "They look likely people." The girl was really as anxious as her mistresses.

Hester proceeded to the drawing-room, and two ladies rose at her entrance. Agreeable in person, and neatly dressed in mourning. The elder was about three or four-and-thirty, a rosy-cheeked woman, with quiet dark eyes; the younger, who was lighter and more delicate looking, was her sister.

"You have apartments to let, we hear," said the elder, presenting her card, "and we are in search of some."

Hester glanced at the card, and read "Mrs. Archer." "I beg your pardon," she said; "are you a widow?"

"No. My husband is abroad."

"Because we should decline to take a gentleman; it would hardly be suitable for a school. Only ladies."

"Well, he is abroad," the lady repeated; "it is only for ourselves. Can we see the rooms?"

"This is the sitting-room," said Hester, "and one bed-room opens from it. The other ——"

"We only require one bed-room," interrupted Mrs. Archer, as she rose to inspect it.

The bargain was soon concluded. They engaged the two rooms at twenty-five shillings a week, and promised to take possession on the morrow.

"What extras will there be?" inquired the younger lady, Miss Graves.

"Extras!" repeated Hester, "not any. Except—I believe it is customary—some little gratuity to the servant." She had not been in the habit of letting lodgings.

"What about the linen? are we to find it?" asked Lucy, when told of the success.

"The linen!" said Hester, dubiously; "I forgot it completely. I never said a word about it."

"Nor the ladies?"

"Nor the ladies. I remember they said they had their own spoons."

"Then they take it for granted we find it, no doubt. Well, it will not much matter, either way. Did you ask for references, Hester?"

She really had not, and was obliged to confess it. Lucy laughed. Hester, who was generally so over-cautious!

The ladies went in, and for some weeks things went on with satisfaction; they paid their rent regularly. Then they began to grow behindhand, and made excuses from time to time, which to Hester and Lucy sounded very plausible. But when the debt amounted to nearly £10, and still no money was coming forth, they grew uneasy. They had trusted to this to help them with the coming quarter's rent.

Hester was in the kitchen one morning, making apple-dumplings for dinner, when Sarah, who stood by, paring apples, began to talk.

"I think they are queer customers we have got hold of, ma'am," she said.

"What do you mean?" inquired her mistress.

"Well, for one thing, I fancy they have come to the end of their tether, and haven't neither cross nor coin to bless themselves with. They are living now upon a'most nothing. And where are their spoons gone to?"

"Their spoons!"

"The four table-spoons put on their table every day for dinner. It's a good month since the two first disappeared—that handsome silver cream-jug vanished about the same time—and now the two last is gone. When I was laying the cloth for dinner yesterday—them precious herrings they bought—I went on, a hunting for the spoons, and Miss Graves said, 'Oh, I have got them. I'll put them on the table myself presently, Sarah.' But none came down to be washed."

"Sarah! where do you think they have gone to?"

"Well," answered Sarah, who was worth her weight in gold for an honest, hard-working servant, though a free, rough-speaking one, "I should say they have pawned them."

"Dear, dear!" lamented Hester, for she did not affect to misunderstand her; "are they reduced to such straits as that?"

"Law, ma'am! let 'em hope they may never be reduced to no worse," retorted Sarah. "You don't know the schemes and contrivances for getting along in London, when one's hard up. It's a mercy there's such things to go to. Since the baker would not leave the bread on credit, our two ladies don't take in enough to feed 'em. They have not had meat, neither, for three days, nor nothing to substitute for it but them six herrings yesterday; which was anything but of the freshest. Miss Graves—it's she as generally speaks—is always ready with excuses: they have colds, and can't eat, or they've this, or that."

"Do they owe much to the baker?"

"Five shillings, odd. He's a cautious man, is our baker, and says he never trusts no lodgers. And now," added Sarah, stopping in her paring and looking at her mistress, "they don't take in any milk."

Hester went on, mixing her crust, and ruminating. She felt much sorrow for them, for she was sure they were not systematic deceivers; and she felt for herself. She looked upon the money as lost, and she wanted it badly.

"I should like to know what they mean to do for coals," resumed Sarah; "there ain't above a couple of scuttlefuls left. They 'll be wanting us to lend 'em some, but if we do, we may whistle for 'em back again Haven't I pared enough yet, ma'am?"

Hester had been paying no attention to the apples, and Sarah had done too many. So, to prevent waste, she determined to make a pie, and so use them up. Popping her dumplings, when they were ready, into the iron pot, she took down the flour-jar again.

Besides this, she had to slice and salt some red cabbage for pickling, so that it struck one o'clock before she had well finished. She told Sarah to dish up the dinner.

It happened to be Irish stew that day, and Sarah reached the large hash-dish and put it on the table, and then taking the saucepan from the fire, she turned the greater portion of its contents into the dish. Hester went into the pantry to put away some of the things she had been using, and just then Miss Graves entered the kitchen, nearly running against Sarah and her hash-dish, which she was carrying out.

Miss Graves went towards the fire, not seeing Hester. And oh! the pinching look of care and want that her face wore! It grieved Hester to the heart to see it, and she wondered she had never noticed it before. She looked with eager eyes into the saucepan, which Sarah had lodged, without its lid, on the fender, and then turned away, as if she would shut out its sight. On the table there lay a little heap of stew, splashed by Sarah when pouring it out, and she stole to the table, and caught this up greedily with her finger, and ate it. Hester heard Sarah coming back again, and had to come out of her hiding-place—not, indeed, that she had gone in to hide. Miss Graves started when she saw her, and her face flushed. Hester pretended not to have seen her until then.

"Is it you, ma'am?" she said. "What a cold day! Pray take care of your sleeve against the table: something seems to have been spilt on it. I hope it has not touched it."

"Oh, no," said Miss Graves, brushing away at her right-hand cuff with a nervous movement.

"Some of them young misses jumped about when they saw and smelt the Irish stew," observed Sarah, when she entered. "It's a rare favourite dish of theirn."

"I don't wonder at that, when it smells as savoury as yours," remarked Miss Graves.

"I looked a little to it myself to-day, and put in a bit of thyme: it's a great improvement," said Hester. "Don't you think so?"

"I don't know," she answered. "I don't think we ever put thyme in ours."

"Then if you'll allow me, I'll send you up a small plate of this to taste," said Hester. "For," she remarked to Lucy afterwards, "I could not bear to think that we were going to eat all we needed and that they should only smell and long for it."

"Oh, thank you," Miss Graves stammered, her face flushing again, "but—the trouble ——"

"Pray don't mention it," interrupted Hester; "it is no trouble. Sarah, bring in that little dish."

She took her place at the head of the school-room table, and Sarah, looking as demure as if she understood nothing, took in the dish. Hester heaped it up.

But of course they could not do that every day, and circumstances grew straiter with their lodgers. Sarah was fond of opening her budget of wonders, as to what they did, but Hester paid little heed to her. One evening, a day or two after the school had broken up for the Christmas holidays, she came bounding into the room, with eager, wild words. Hester and Lucy were sitting by fire-light, for it was the dusk hour before tea, and she startled them both, though she spoke in a whisper.

"Ma'am! Miss Lucy! as sure as you are both alive, them two have a man upstairs!"

"Who is he? What is he come for? Money, I suppose."

"Not that sort of a man," retorted Sarah, an indefinite amount of contempt in her tone for her mistress's simplicity—"not folks as call. A man locked up with 'em; concealed in their bed-room."

"How can you assert such a thing, Sarah?" exclaimed Lucy, sharply. "If they heard you, they might have you up before a police-court."

"Shouldn't care if they did," returned the girl. "I'd stand up for the truth there as well as here. If ever I heard a man talk, I heard one up in their room just now."

"Then you did not *see* him?" observed Lucy, sarcastically.

"Nor didn't want to, Miss Lucy, if you mean for convincing my eyes. I'll tell you, ma'am, how it was," she added, turning to her mistress—as Hester was always called. "Their candles be all out—the last pound have lasted 'em three weeks, if it have lasted one, so it's plain they have mostly sat in the dark. In getting the candlesticks out, just now, I remembered there was nothing to put in 'em, so up I went into the drawing-room to say so. The door was locked when I got there—and they have kept it so for the last few days, which is another odd thing, and took to making their own bed, which is odder still. I wasn't in a sunny humour—locking up rooms like that, indeed!—and I gave the latch a twist and a sharp push, and open it flew. In I went: there wasn't a bit of fire in the grate, but they have it now in their bed-room instead—I should like to know why. It was next to pitch dark, save a glimmer of light that came through the bed-room door, which was on the jar, and as I stood there a strange voice, a man's voice, called out, 'I am so thirsty! If there's nothing else, you must give me water. My lips and tongue are parched.'"

"Sarah, how can you be so foolish?" uttered Lucy. "Mrs. Archer speaks gruffly."

"A man's voice it was. I'll take my Bible oath on it," persisted

Sarah. "I ran against the table then, and caused a noise: not for the purpose: I was stepping softly forrard to peep in, and came in contract with one of its legs. Out flew Miss Graves, just as if I'd been a robber, and banged-to the door behind her.

"'Who's there?' she called out: for now the door was shut we couldn't see the ghost of one another.

"'It's only me, miss,' I answered. 'There ain't no candles left.'

"'Oh—well—I—I'll see about it,' she said. 'We don't want them yet; we are sitting by fire-light. How did you get in, Sarah? I thought I slipped the bolt: for when we are sitting by ourselves up here, and you all downstairs, we feel timid.'

"'You couldn't have slipped it very far, miss,' I said; 'I gave the door a smart push, and it opened. Of course I shouldn't have done it if I had known you'd fastened me out, but this is an awk'ard latch, and used to have a trick of catching, and I thought no more but what it was at it again.' So, with that, ma'am, I came away downstairs, and she came across the room and bolted the door again."

"Your ears heard double," cried Lucy. "You do fancy strange things sometimes, Sarah. Recollect the evening you came in to us last summer and protested Miss Brown was talking out of the front window. And she fast asleep in her bed all the time at the back of the house."

"That Miss Brown had as many ruses as a fox," uttered Sarah, "and I shall never believe but what she was talking out at the front winder; and to somebody over the wall, too! However, she's gone, so it don't matter; but, whether or no, I ain't mistaken now, and I'll lay my life there is a man up there."

Lucy raised the fire into a blaze, which lighted up the amused, incredulous smile on her face. But Hester was staggered. The girl was so very earnest, and she knew she had her share of strong common-sense.

"It was a gentleman's voice," she resumed, "and he spoke as if he was tired, or else in pain. Suppose I go and borrow the next door ladder, and climb up to their winder, and have a look in?"

"Yes," cried Lucy, laughing heartily as she put down the poker, "do, Sarah. Never mind falls."

"What can I say we want with it? They'll think night's a queer time to borrow a garden ladder. Suppose I go with a tale that an obstinate fit has took our curtains, and they won't draw, and I want to get up to the rings? It is ——"

"Do not run on so, Sarah," interrupted her mistress; "you know I should permit nothing of the sort. And if the blind is down, as it is almost sure to be, you could not see into the room if you did get up to the window."

"I'll go and see," was Sarah's answer, as she darted into the hall and thence to the garden.

"It is down," she said, returning again. "But just come and look here, Miss Lucy. If there isn't the shadow of a man's hat on the blind, I never saw a hat yet."

They went out into the cold night, and Hester followed them. There really was the outline of a man's hat thrown upon the blind. It seemed as if the little bamboo table had been drawn from the corner of the room—to get at the cupboard, probably—and was placed in front of the window. On it stood the hat, and the opposite fire-light threw its shadow on the blind. As they looked, the form of one of the ladies passed before the window and lifted the table back to its place, out of sight, and Hester and Lucy went shivering into the house again.

"Now, ma'am, what do you think?" asked Sarah, triumphantly.

"Why I think that someone has called," resolutely replied Hester. "The ladies are most respectable in their conduct; perfectly so: it is impossible to think otherwise. You may have been out of the way when he—whoever it is—came to the door, and one of them must have come down and let him in. As to his being in the bed-room, it is natural they should be where the fire is, this cold night."

"Not a soul has been to the door this afternoon," persisted Sarah. "I have been ironing, and have never stirred out of the kitchen. But now, ma'am, to prove the thing, I'll just turn the key of the front door, and put it in my pocket. If it is a visitor, he must ask to be let out; if it's not——"

Sarah said no more. For who should have entered, after a tap at the door, but Miss Graves. She held a tea-cup in her hand.

"I am very sorry to trouble you, Miss Halliwell," she said, hesitatingly—she was a bad beggar—"but would you oblige us with a little tea to-night? We are out of it, and it is late to go and purchase any."

"Certainly," answered Hester, pleasantly, rising to unlock the old sideboard drawer, where she kept her tea-caddy. "Nothing is so refreshing as a cup of tea."

"We don't in general care for it," observed Miss Graves, "but my sister is very poorly to-night, and complains of thirst. Thank you greatly," she added, taking the cup from Hester.

"Don't you want water for it, ma'am?" called out Sarah. "Our kettle is on the boil."

"Yes, if you please," she answered. "I will come into the kitchen and make it now."

She did so, having a contest with Sarah afterwards. The latter wanted to carry up the tray with the cups and saucers, but Miss Graves insisted on doing it herself.

"To keep me out of the room," muttered Sarah when she was gone. "For fear I should see what I should see."

However, in about half-an-hour the bell rang, and up bounded

Sarah. It was to take away the tray; and when she had put it in the kitchen she went into the parlour again, where Hester and Lucy were now at their tea.

"Well, what did you see?" inquired Lucy.

"Nothing, ma'am; and didn't expect to," was Sarah's sulky reply. "They took care of that before they called me up."

"Did you go into the bed-room?"

"Yes. Miss Graves was sitting at the table, as if she'd been making tea; and Mrs. Archer was by the fire, looking well enough, as far as I saw by fire-light. They had stirred the blaze up just as I went in, as an excuse for having no candles."

"And what about the gentleman?" laughed Lucy.

"I expect he was in the bed, or on it, for the curtains was all drawn close round it as tight as wax, like I have never seen 'em before. I'm sure, ma'am, this affair's as good as a play."

"Not to me," sighed Hester, "if there should be anything in it."

"And the hat?" continued Lucy.

"Well, I was stupid there. I was so struck with them curtains —picturing what was inside 'em, and peering if there wasn't a slit as big as a needle to look through, that I never thought of the hat or the table. But don't you flatter yourself it was there, Miss Lucy; they'd take precious good care to put it away afore they rang for me. I've a notion the man must be ill."

"Why so?"

"Because I heard him say he was parched, as I told you, ma'am. And then, their having the tea! That wasn't for Mrs. Archer; there's no more the matter with her than there is with me. Besides, who's the toast-and-water for? They told me to make a quart-jug full, and Miss Graves said she'd come down and fetch it."

They heard no more that night of the strange visitor. If he was there, he remained, for Sarah carried out her threat, and put the key of the front door in her pocket. The next morning Hester went into the kitchen to give orders.

"Look here, ma'am," cried Sarah, exhibiting some meat upon a plate. "Miss Graves has been out and brought in this bit of scrag of mutton and them two turnips, and she said she supposed you'd obleege 'em with a bit of parsley out of the garden. It's to make some broth for her sister, she said, and they'll stew it upstairs; and I'm to take it up with the saucepan of water. Not more than sixpence she couldn't have gave for it," concluded Sarah, taking up the meat with an action of contempt, and flapping it down on the plate again.

"Sarah, you are unfeeling," exclaimed her mistress, reprovingly. "The poor ladies are much to be pitied."

"Pitied, indeed! What business have they in a house like ours, with no money to carry 'em on in it?" retorted Sarah, who was in one of her worst humours. "And the man they have up there—perhaps he is to be pitied, too!"

"I must forbid further allusion to that absurdity, Sarah. There is no man up there; the very idea is preposterous."

"Very well, ma'am. If anything bad turns up out of this, don't say I did not give warning of it. One on 'em slept on the sofa in the drawing-room last night, for I see the bed-clothes there this morning. I think that proves something."

The girl tossed her head, and went out of the kitchen. Hester felt uneasy all that day; but nothing fresh arose. Night came, and Lucy, who had a bad cold (caught through flying out the previous night to stare at their window), went to bed at nine o'clock. At ten Hester sent Sarah, sitting up herself to finish a little sewing that she had in hand. After that she sat warming her feet, and it was upon the stroke of eleven when she rose to go to bed.

She had the candle in one hand, and her work in the other, and was going softly up the stairs, when the drawing-room door was flung violently open, and out dashed Mrs. Archer, nearly knocking Hester and her load down together.

(*To be continued.*)

SONNET.

I saw Prometheus in a torrid clime,
Up barren heights and wild, where never flock
Had grazed—lone sufferer chained to his lone rock,
'Twixt heav'n and earth—dread emblem of man's crime,
Eternally defying Jove and Time.
Day's sun, night's dews, the vulture's beak I saw
Him calmly bear; and my soul filled with awe,
For that stern calm had something of sublime
That bore me up, as on a lofty thought
We soar with pinion strong, nor look below
At lessening earth.—Prometheus, thou hast bought
Thy Godhead at man's price; mind wed to woe,
And in thy Pagan legend still we see
Immortal soul—suffering humanity.

Julia Kavanagh.

HER ONLY CHANCE.

LAURA LESLIE left school with a firm determination to get on in life, to inspire her neighbours with a species of respectful admiration, and ultimately to conquer for herself by matrimony a certain position in the great world which she felt so eminently fitted to adorn.

Let us briefly enumerate her advantages. She was well born and well educated—in the narrow sense of having passed innumerable examinations in the most creditable manner. A fair, smiling face and expressive blue eyes rendered her the incalculable service of effectually masking a hard, business-like little heart under a soft, sympathetic garb. A tall, slim figure lent her that air of natural distinction which is so invaluable to a young woman bent on making a mark in the world. Finally, Laura was an only child, for which fact she felt that she could never be sufficiently thankful. No awkward, long-legged brothers, always getting into mischief and running up heavy bills at college! No inconvenient younger sisters, clamouring for their share of new dresses and admiration! It is to be doubted whether she even felt her mother's early death to be an unmitigated evil. At all events she thoroughly appreciated the independence consequent upon her forlorn condition.

Laura soon found that she had to contend with one great difficulty in her father's habits. Mr. Leslie (although descended from a perfectly genuine earl, as Laura often reminded herself) was an unworldly old bookworm, who shuffled about during the greater part of the day in carpet slippers and a loose alpaca coat, equally indifferent to the rival claims upon his attention of his daughter and his parish, so long as they did not interfere with his favourite hobby.

But even worse than the carpet slippers and the slovenly early dinners in which the old gentleman had revelled undisturbed for so many years, was his unsophisticated trick of making friends with all sorts of odd people, quite outside the pale of society, provided they struck him as interesting companions.

Mr. Croft, for instance, who had lately taken the Hall Farm, and of whom until then they had never heard. As far as Laura could make out her father was in the habit of associating with him on terms of perfect equality—a state of things which should certainly not continue if she could help it!

For Mr. Croft, as far as they knew, was of no more social standing in the world than any of the other farmers in the neighbourhood Not that she had seen the man yet, for he happened to be away from Westford at the time of her return. But she could fancy him easily: some aggressive old churchwarden, whose prosy pedantry had deluded

her father into the belief that he had at last lighted upon a kindred spirit.

The first struggle took place across the breakfast table, over which Laura was presiding in a pretty spring frock, looking the very picture of guileless girlhood as she carefully poured out her father's tea and helped him to his daily boiled egg.

"Thank you, my dear," said the old gentleman dreamily, looking up from the large volume reposing by the side of his plate. "I have had a note from Croft; here it is—no, that's not it. Nor that either. Well, I must have mislaid it, then. How very singular! I made sure that it was in my hand a minute ago!"

"Oh, that is impossible, papa! Besides, you know you are always losing things! But, at any rate, you can remember the contents of this wonderful note!"

"Nothing important, my dear; at least in one sense. He wished to show me a catalogue of books he came across the other day; a unique list from all accounts, but nothing that will interest you, I fear. So I asked him to bring it this evening, and——"

"Do you mean to say you asked him to *dinner*, papa?" interrupted Laura, icily.

"Yes, I suppose so, my dear," was the somewhat vague reply. Mr. Leslie was fast relapsing into oblivion.

Laura felt keenly that the moment had arrived when she ought to assert herself once for all, but she was a little disconcerted by her father's serene unconsciousness of offence. She was rather too much afraid of him to risk a direct collision, and in spite of his sleepy ways she felt instinctively that his scorn would not be a pleasant thing to encounter. Still, it was very clear that something must be done.

"Papa," she began, hesitatingly.

"Yes, my dear," replied Mr. Leslie, without raising his eyes from his book.

"Don't you think the poor man will feel rather out of his element dining here to-night?"

"Why, my dear? He has done so often before."

"Ah, but that was rather different," murmured Laura, with a desperate but carefully repressed longing to shake her poor old parent into a livelier sense of the conventionalities.

"I daresay he won't mind dining late," Mr. Leslie went on; "in fact, I fancy he does so at home. But we shall want a long evening to compare his catalogue with the one they sent me from town. You must amuse yourself with your needlework, my dear, whilst we talk."

Laura sighed deeply, shrugged her shoulders, and went on with her breakfast.

"Poor papa is incorrigible," she thought. "I must direct my attack against the monster in person. Unless he is the obtusest of mankind he will feel too uncomfortable ever to reappear at the vicarage."

With this thoroughly hospitable intention, Laura exhausted her somewhat limited resources in devising a smart little dinner, which would, she hoped, impress forcibly upon Mr. Croft the difference between vicarage and farmhouse habits. For a time she hesitated over her choice of a dress; perhaps it would be most cutting to ignore the presence of a visitor altogether, and appear in her oldest and shabbiest attire.

But after all, Laura was only nineteen and had some of the weaknesses of her sex, although tempered with an unusual amount of discretion. So she finally proved to herself satisfactorily that her wisest course would be to annihilate poor Mr. Croft by the elegance of her person as well as by the refinement of her surroundings.

"If he has any sense at all, he will feel like that proverbial bull in a china shop," she thought rather spitefully, being annoyed at the waste of a clean muslin frock. For Laura's best frocks were few and far between; still as she sensibly reflected, her opportunities of wearing them were not numerous; and even a hopelessly unappreciative bucolic audience is better than none. Thus she sailed into the drawing-room, mercilessly resolved to pulverise the unfortunate visitor with her scorn, but not altogether averse to permitting him one glance at his hostess's unrivalled charms before flying vanquished from the field!

Exactly two minutes of Mr. Croft's society were sufficient to dispel this pleasing vision. Good-looking, self-possessed and irreproachably dressed in evening clothes, he was a very different person to the clumsy rustic that Laura had anticipated. Stunned by this discovery, she actually found herself listening with a pleased smile to Mr. Croft's admiring comments on the flowers before she realised how conspicuously she had failed in playing her part. Here was this objectionable stranger (for his veneer of good manners, if one came to think of it, rather intensified the awkwardness of the situation) not only appearing perfectly at home amidst his superior surroundings, but even presuming to set his hostess at ease, as if she were merely a shy schoolgirl.

Laura could have cried with vexation, but she pulled herself together, and anxiously awaited the moment when, by some false step, he should lay himself open to the crushing snub which she was longing to administer. In the meantime, she was forced to admit that he was much more interesting than the generality of their friends. Perhaps it was accounted for by his having lived abroad, though it was a revelation to Laura that colonial life had such a refining effect.

"Why did you come home?" she found herself asking with genuine interest.

"A variety of reasons, among which several aged and affectionate relatives figured largely, obliged me to return. Besides, it was a very rough life."

"I wonder that you minded that, as you were brought up to it,"

she could not help saying. This cool assumption of equality was intolerable.

Mr. Croft looked amused. "You are a wonderful judge of character," he said. "Candidly, I did *not* mind it in the least. Still, it is pleasant to be in civilised society again." Then he turned to Mr. Leslie with some apposite remark, which started the old gentleman off on one of his favourite hobbies.

If by any chance Mr. Croft found a dainty little dinner, presided over by a charmingly pretty hostess, preferable to a dish of mutton chops dispensed by a prosy old bookworm, he was far too prudent to show it. For the remainder of the evening he confined his attention to Mr. Leslie, which unexpected manœuvre annoyed the cool Laura more than she cared to confess.

But this was by no means the last that she was destined to see of her foe. Unsubdued by her stately bearing and studiedly distant manners, he continued his frequent visits at the vicarage, and insisted with so much quiet pertinacity upon a friendly recognition of his presence, that Laura gradually laid down her arms and drifted with the stream.

The last barrier was broken down on the day when she was weak enough to accept his offer of a horse. He had once before mentioned in a tentative way that it would be very pleasant for the Vicar to have a companion on his solitary rides, and that his own bay mare carried a lady; but she had deliberately ignored the suggestion, foreseeing that it must lead to increased intimacy. After a time, however, the monotony of existence in the country broke even her proud spirit. She had chilled the advances of their few neighbours, on the unanswerable grounds that she did not take the slightest interest in either hearing or retailing local gossip—a lofty sentiment, which, being translated, meant that she had no intention of associating with the doctor's wife or the solicitor's daughters, who represented all the available society of the place. On the other hand, by the time one has weeded out all such of one's country neighbours as might correctly be termed "common-place," one is apt to find oneself the proud centre of a refined solitude. Such was the case with Laura.

In spite of the depressing fact that the county families took not the slightest notice of her return home, she still hoped that by dint of keeping her humbler surroundings at a distance she might gradually work into the circle in which she mentally classed herself. She often quoted a favourite maxim of a worldly old aunt's, with whom she had spent most of her holidays, to the effect that every girl had at least one chance of getting on in life if she only left herself free to embrace it. Laura firmly resolved to act up to this pleasing idea of Aunt Augusta's. In the meantime life was abominably dull, and in the absence of all witnesses it did not appear such an unpardonable indiscretion to ignore the question of social dis-

arity in the solitary instance of Mr. Croft. Besides, she comforted erself with the gracious thought that she could always shake him off f she really wished it.

"I would not run the risk if he had any female relatives to take dvantage of my weakness," she thought. "Not even for the sake f a ride. But I can trust myself to keep the man in his place."

Thus she stifled the voice of conscience, ever warning her in the ccents of Aunt Augusta, that she was diverging from the path of luty and abandoning her former high standard.

The first ride was so pleasant that Laura soon forgot her scruples, nd yielded herself to the full enjoyment of the present. Mr. Croft ed the mare up to the vicarage himself, and suggested indifferently hat perhaps he had better accompany them a little way to see how he behaved. Oddly enough he did not turn back, although her onduct proved irreproachable. Laura's knowledge of riding was mited to a few lessons she had taken during her visits to Scar-orough, so she was not sufficiently at her ease to indulge in any harp speeches. As for the Vicar, he was always fond of a patient stener, and experience was beginning to teach him that outsiders ere, as a rule, far more attentive to his long-winded discourses than is pretty daughter. Laura smiled and said, "Yes, papa," in the icest manner at stated intervals during his explanations, still it was bvious that she took but a languid interest in archæological dis-overies, and was lukewarm even on the all-absorbing topic of old anuscripts. Plainly a sympathetic stranger who could appreciate oth sides of the difficulty was an invaluable addition to this family arty.

"I sometimes think that you hardly value your father's learning as ou should," observed Mr. Croft one day whilst they were waiting utside a cottage where the Vicar was visiting a sick child. The first de had been succeeded by many others, and Laura had insensibly lided into a close friendship with the once-despised tenant of the Iall Farm. She did not resent his straightforward criticism of her onduct; indeed she tacitly acknowledged the truth of the accusa-on.

"I suppose papa really knows a great deal," she answered; "but e doesn't contrive to communicate his learning in a very palatable orm. Doesn't he remind you of a dictionary? Now some clever eople are so different!"

The words were scarcely spoken when she was struck by the bsurdity of the situation. Here was she, seriously discussing with ie tenant of the Hall Farm a subject upon which by the nature of ings he must necessarily be ignorant.

How could he possibly decide between the contending claims of ighly-educated people? No wonder he was immensely impressed v her father's prosy conversation, as probably he had never even sociated with a University man before.

"How absurd! I am treating him exactly like an equal," she thought, and tried to laugh. But candour compelled her to add: "No wonder; he is an equal, practically a superior, in all that is worth knowing."

Obviously if this kind of thing had gone on much longer, Aunt Augusta's pupil would have been hopelessly demoralised. But at this opportune moment a piece of news from the outer world broke in upon Laura's day dreams, and rudely awoke her to a sense of her danger.

"Have you heard that my landlord is expected at the Hall?" inquired Mr. Croft one morning as he met her outside the vicarage gate.

"What! Sir Gilbert is not coming home!"

"Yes, indeed, and Miss Coventry. They say she has taken a great dislike to their place in Norfolk, and under those circumstances we may expect to see a good deal of them here, for she entirely rules her father. My informant," he added, smiling, "is Mrs. Smith at the shop, but as she was formerly a servant at the Hall, no doubt she knows all about it. Now I hope you have nothing to do this afternoon, because I have come to arrange with your father about that long ride over the hills we have so often talked of trying."

"I am afraid that I cannot possibly manage it as I have an engagement," began Laura, stiffly. "Perhaps papa will like to come with you."

"What nonsense. You know he is perfectly indifferent to views, and infinitely prefers a ride along the hard road, as affording fewer interruptions to conversation. But of course your engagement is a movable one; only yesterday you were sighing for the hills."

"Indeed it is quite impossible," reiterated Miss Leslie, with so much decision that her companion fairly stared at her in astonishment; then with a formal bow, sauntered out at the gate and home, beguiling the journey with morose reflections on the wonderful ways of women.

As he strolled along he busied himself vainly in trying to evolve some reasonable explanation of Laura's strange behaviour. Probably, after all, she was only a little shy or out of temper (as it happened she never gave way to either of these human weaknesses). At any rate, he might have tried the effect of a little judicious coaxing, instead of striding away at the first rebuff, like a sulky bear. He had half a mind to return to the vicarage, but thinking better of it, went out and blew up the farm-bailiff for wasting his time; a proceeding which hurt nobody and acted as a safety valve. Little did he imagine that he had uttered his own death warrant; that Laura's blue eyes had taken in the whole situation at a glance, and her pretty, scheming head at once decided how to act. With the return of the Coventrys she saw a natural opening into that society which she had always coveted; only it would never do for them to find her

fast friends with their own tenant. With laudable strength of mind she resolved to break with Mr. Croft at once.

"It is very unpleasant, but it must be done," she said firmly, and then fell into a brilliant day-dream, in which she saw herself established as Miss Coventry's bosom friend, and taking a conspicuous part in all the entertainments to be given at the Hall. And then what illimitable possibilities for the future she foresaw!

"For if papa is really as clever as they say, he may some day become a bishop," she reflected; "and a bishop's daughter is equal to anybody!"

As it happened, Laura was personally acquainted with only one bishop's daughter, and she had recently married the eldest son of a peer; so she naturally ranked their advantages rather highly.

"But I daresay he would not accept it if he got the chance," she added gloomily. "At least, not if he had to alter his ways and forsake his old carpet slippers and alpaca coat, which would look slightly incongruous in a palace! I must contrive to impress upon the Coventrys that his eccentricities are those of a literary man, and then let him quietly slip into the background. It *is* hard that papa, with his connections and talents, should be so little use! I might almost as well be a foundling! Aunt Augusta is too much of an invalid to help; besides, she never leaves Scarborough. So I must rely entirely upon myself, and undoubtedly my first step will be to make friends with the Coventrys."

In making this very sensible resolution Laura had not paid sufficient attention to one important item, namely, a reciprocity of interests on the part of Miss Coventry. To her intense disappointment, that young lady received her advances coolly and without any demonstrations of rapture at the discovery of a congenial spirit. Miss Coventry was already a favourite of Fortune, rich, handsome, and well-connected. She stood in no need of Laura, and she showed it unmistakably in her manner.

The first interview, somehow, was not a success. Laura, after expending much superfluous energy on smartening up the old Vicar sufficiently to accompany her on a formal call, was glad when it was over. Miss Coventry was certainly exquisitely pretty; prettier than herself, Laura reluctantly admitted; but they never got beyond the merest platitudes, and all Laura's efforts at an approach to intimacy met with no response. Yet throughout the interview Miss Coventry's manner was so courteous, and her bearing so perfect, that it was impossible to take the slightest offence at her somewhat distant manner.

Mr. Leslie had fared far better with Sir Gilbert, a pompous but kindly old gentleman, much interested in the condition of the Highway Board, and such local topics. Laura could not help wishing that Miss Coventry had taken more after her father. Still she had the presence of mind to describe the inmates of the Hall as "quite

charming, and such pleasant neighbours!" to the doctor's wife, who had not yet summoned up courage to call, and who forthwith propagated the pleasing fiction that Miss Leslie and Miss Coventry were in a fair way of becoming quite inseparable!

Laura's sole thought now was how to convert this fictitious intimacy into a substantial reality. She brooded over the idea until the words "Miss Coventry" and "social success" seemed almost convertible terms in her mind. If Sir Gilbert happened to speak to her coming out of church, or his daughter nodded across the road, it sent her home in a whirl of pleasant anticipations. At the same time, she contrived to avoid any meetings with Mr. Croft, wisely preferring this negative method of eluding the difficulty to a more open breach of the peace. But she missed him horribly at times, in spite of a self-approving conscience, finding Miss Coventry's frigid greetings but a poor substitute for the merry rides and confidential talks which a strong sense of duty compelled her reluctantly to forego for the future.

This state of things continued for some weeks, when Laura was at last rewarded for her sacrifices by receiving (in common with about two hundred other people) an invitation to a garden party at the Hall. Eagerly she read and re-read the formal card, as if there were something peculiarly fascinating about the brief statement that Miss Coventry would be at home from four to seven on the following Thursday.

To her indomitably hopeful disposition this slight civility seemed likely to inaugurate a new era. Here at last was the opportunity she desired for soaring above her petty surroundings and taking her first step up the social ladder. With unwearying patience she rehearsed every detail of her part, omitting no trifling accessory of dress or deportment which might contribute to her success.

"One thing I certainly want," she thought regretfully, as she wandered along the overgrown paths of the rambling, neglected old garden on the eve of the eventful day. "It is so awkward going about without any regular chaperon; quite a disadvantage to a girl, in my opinion. If only poor mamma had lived!"

A crashing sound broke in upon her reveries, and before she had time to fly, Mr. Croft was off his horse and shaking hands with her across the hedge.

"I had no intention of coming this way until I saw you," he explained, "but I daresay you will let me use the short cut through the garden."

Before she could reply they were walking, side by side, down the shady path, the bay mare snuffling sympathetically at her master's shoulder as she followed them.

Needless to say that Laura was profoundly embarrassed by this unexpected meeting. She rapidly calculated that at the pace they were walking it must be several minutes before they reached the house. If

only her companion would speak, the situation would be so much more bearable! To relieve the intolerable constraint, she turned slightly back and stroked the mare's soft nose.

"Poor Kitty, do you want some sugar?"

"She is getting used to doing without it," rejoined Mr. Croft softly. "Like all pleasant things, the sugar didn't last long."

"I don't know what you mean," stammered Laura, flushing scarlet but assuming an air of dignified unconsciousness.

"Then you are rather wanting in your usual penetration to-day, Miss Leslie! I don't think my meaning was very obscure. I was only alluding to a recent personal experience."

Poor Laura was beside herself with annoyance at being drawn into such a discussion. She turned away her head, biting her lips to keep back bitter tears of mortification.

Mr. Croft, looking up suddenly, perceived her agitation and, completely misunderstanding its origin, was seized with compunction. This then was the explanation of her strange manner and inexplicable avoidance of his society! Her character instantly acquired a new charm in his eyes, and the pathetic expression of wounded feeling which he fancied he read in her face added a singular charm to its ordinary calm prettiness.

"What a fool I am!" he ejaculated mentally; then aloud: "Forgive me, Miss Leslie. I never meant to distress you. I had no idea that you minded what I said. You are not angry with me?"

Laura struggled hard to reply, but her wonted self-command completely forsook her. She could only drop her eyes helplessly beneath his keen glance. The childish misery of her quivering little mouth stirred Mr. Croft completely out of his indifferent attitude of critical admiration.

"Wait one moment, Laura," he exclaimed, seizing her firmly by the hand as she started back. "You must stop and hear me. I have made rather a mess of things in general, I am afraid, but if you will trust me, I know I can make you happy ——"

At this point Laura suddenly recovered her presence of mind, and abruptly terminated the interview by wrenching away her hand, and darting off across the lawn towards the house, never pausing to take breath until she found herself in her own room. By this bold move Mr. Croft was left to the company of his mare, and felt, it must be owned, a trifle foolish. He considered for a moment what to do next. Pursuit was obviously impossible, as the most ardent lover would hesitate before dragging his horse across his prospective father-in-law's lawn, especially when the aforesaid lawn was overlooked by half-a-dozen windows. And it would be misleading to describe Mr. Croft as a very ardent lover. No man had ever started out with less intention of making an offer in the course of the afternoon. A sudden impulse of affectionate pity had landed him in this novel

position. Still he was a conscientious man, and quite aware that he had said either too much or too little.

"Poor little girl, how shy she is!" he thought, as he softly re-opened the gate he had just come through and slipped back into the wood. "Who would ever have imagined that she had so much feeling under her demure manner! But I should enjoy myself more if I had settled the affair straight off instead of having to begin again to-morrow!"

Mr. Croft probably congratulated himself more than once, in after life, upon the fact that mortals are not always granted the immediate fulfilment of their wishes.

II.

LAURA rose on the following morning feeling equally exhausted in body and mind—a not unusual result of a sleepless night devoted to meditation. Lamentable to relate, it was all so much time and energy wasted, for she had resolved upon nothing. Mr. Croft's sudden development in the character of a lover had revealed many things to her understanding. Amongst others, the imminent risk she ran of falling away from her cherished ideal. She had broken down at the point where she deemed herself impregnable, and bid fair at this rate to swell the ranks of imbecile sentimentalists who marry for love to the exclusion of all other considerations. It was a desperate temptation to cast prudence and county society aside for ever and to throw in her lot with the man who simply promised to make her happy!

Apart from his position, Mr. Croft was certainly nicer than anybody else. She had a melancholy conviction that she should never meet so many personal charms united to an appropriate social standing. Still, poor Laura distinctly realised that it was a temptation to be fought against, and very bravely did she struggle with her inclinations. By the afternoon her mind was irrevocably made up, though the process had completely banished all pleasant anticipations of the impending party.

"If he were even a curate or a doctor, it would be a different thing," she thought; "but, as it is, he has literally *no* position. People might not even call on us! No, I could not stand it for any man! I may be miserable, but I shall not lose my self-respect," she added, mechanically examining the back of her new hat in the glass. "No doubt my chance will come some day, and then I shall be rewarded for my prudence."

In the meantime she felt very wretched, and the reception awaiting her at the Hall was hardly calculated to dispel her gloomy thoughts.

Miss Coventry made an effective hostess. Perfectly dressed in a subtle combination of soft lace and muslin, which made every other garment present look commonplace or clumsy, she received her

visitors with an indifferent dignity which at once repelled and fascinated Laura. In spite of rebuffs, she still admired her paragon inordinately, and would have enjoyed beyond measure behaving in exactly the same manner if she ever had the opportunity. Soured by all that she had lately gone through, Laura could imagine no bliss greater than that of ultimately climbing to a position from which she could look down with calm indifference on the perpetual struggle for precedence that went on around her. With what enviable coolness Miss Coventry ignored the superior claims to distinction of the little local dignitaries: regarding the whole scene from such a height that all petty inequalities were lost to sight. Laura never dreamed that in other scenes Miss Coventry herself might be reduced to pushing for a place like the most obsequious of her humble admirers. She concluded that the wearing struggle for recognition would cease when one was once assured of an acknowledged position in the county: a conclusion which amply proved her real ignorance of human nature.

On recalling this garden party in after years, Laura felt convinced that it had been one of the most unpleasant experiences of her life. She occupied an ambiguous position between the comfortably dowdy country neighbours, who, attired in their Sunday dresses, were exchanging profound confidences concerning the state of the barometer, and the group of personal friends who had rallied round Miss Coventry. Now Laura had let it be generally understood that she was on a very intimate footing at the Hall. The neighbours commonly assumed that she and Miss Coventry were completely absorbed in each other's society, and, to say the least, she had taken no pains to correct this erroneous impression. It was therefore extremely mortifying that on the first opportunity that arose for demonstrating her superiority, she should find herself unmistakably excluded from the charmed circle. She felt indescribably annoyed at perceiving that her discomfiture was giving evident enjoyment to the surrounding spectators. For instance, the doctor's wife, a kind-hearted person but not at all above human weaknesses, accosted her in a slightly patronising manner that was directly traceable to her indifferent reception.

"I see you feel just as great a stranger as the rest of us," said Mrs. Hall, attempting at the same time to slip her arm through Laura's, a familiarity which the latter firmly resisted. "It is the first time I have been inside the gates, and I mean to see all I can. Perhaps you know some of the visitors and can tell me their names?"

Thus pressed, Laura was reluctantly forced to admit her ignorance, an admission which was followed by an increasing familiarity on Mrs. Hall's part.

"Never mind, my dear; we shall do very well, though they don't introduce us to all their grand friends! You keep close to me and we shall be as independent as possible. Why, I do believe that is

your friend Mr. Croft coming towards us!" broke off the old lady in a tone of some excitement. "But of course you expected him!"

"Indeed I did not!" contradicted Laura, with rather excusable vehemence. Mrs. Hall had a way of putting things which at times was well nigh intolerable. Besides, the sight of Mr. Croft was in itself a shock. She had never pictured him at a garden-party, and felt a vague curiosity respecting his attitude towards the other guests. Although, with the aid of a white tulle veil and lace parasol, she contrived to conceal her excitement from observation, she was in reality trembling all over with contending emotions. Long before she had perfectly recovered her equanimity, Mr. Croft was standing beside them, smiling imperturbably at Mrs Hall's patronising reception. That good lady's loudly-expressed astonishment at the unexpected meeting appeared to arouse in him no sense of irritation. He acquiesced cheerfully in her gushing admiration of all the arrangements. He even admitted with a suitable show of gratitude that it was wonderfully kind of Sir Gilbert to have sent him an invitation.

And Laura listened with ever-increasing disappointment. When she had first seen him advancing across the lawn, her heart had glowed with a sudden hope that after all she had been mistaken in her former estimate of his position. She would willingly have grasped at the faintest show of reason for reversing her decision. If he could only have claimed acquaintance with any of the more distinguished guests, or even have shown a certain amount of lofty contempt for Mrs. Hall's ridiculous patronage, it would have told greatly in his favour. As it was, he did neither. Mrs. Hall's remarks were received with so much respectful attention, and he appeared so thoroughly satisfied with his present companions, that Laura, naturally judging from her own conduct under similar circumstances, felt more than ever convinced that she represented his only friend among the large gathering.

The fact that his conversation was unusually animated and amusing did not influence her feelings in the least. She had long since ceased to have any doubts respecting his personal attractions; what she in vain sighed for was some public recognition of his social importance. It is certain that by a few well-timed allusions and judicious references, Mr. Croft could easily have ensured his success with Laura. As it was, the origin of her perpetual vacillations never once struck him.

"All our instincts are different," thought Miss Leslie in despair. "I could never settle down quietly with a man who is perfectly content to be seen with that horrid little woman all the afternoon, and who takes her offensive patronage as merely a matter of course!"

As if in corroboration of this theory, she heard Mr. Croft the next moment affirming that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to accompany Mrs. Hall on a tour of inspection round the garden.

"I quite agree with you that it would be best to investigate everything thoroughly now that we have the chance," he continued, smiling slightly at Laura, who instantly averted her head. "Surely you think so too, Miss Leslie?"

"Go by all means, if it amuses you; I am much too tired to walk about," was the indifferent reply, uttered the more frigidly because at that moment a break in the crowd revealed Miss Coventry a few paces off, contemplating the trio with some interest.

"Too tired!" echoed Mr. Croft rather blankly. "But if you come this way we can find some seats under the cedars." Obviously, the prospect of a solitary ramble with Mrs. Hall was damping even to his cheerful spirits. But Laura was firm in her resolution to remain near the band—listening to the music, she declared, tired her less than talking. She was not in the habit of wasting much sympathy over other people's petty annoyances, and it was with an unmitigated sense of relief that she at last saw Mr. Croft disappear among the trees. Mrs. Hall was apparently much elated at securing a listener, and might be trusted not to relinquish him until she had imparted all the information she possessed regarding the history of those present. Laura had every reason to hope that she had seen the last of them both, for that day, at least. She was fast becoming irritable with annoyance, and felt a strange inclination to go home and cry comfortably, instead of running the chance of any further disappointments. A gleam of light broke through the clouds when Miss Coventry approached her, accompanied by an unknown gentleman.

"You are alone," she began, addressing Laura with an unusually gracious smile; "and Major Sutton knows nobody. I wish you would try and entertain each other. I am so sorry that I have to make myself generally useful to-day, and cannot devote myself to anyone in particular."

Now the Major was stout, and bald, and prosy; in short, he would have been pronounced detestable, coming from any other quarter. As it was, Laura greeted him with her sweetest smile, and ruthlessly compressed her muslin skirts to make room for him on the seat.

"Beautiful country this of yours," he began, condescendingly, as if she ought to be personally indebted to him for the flattering admission. "But don't you find it a great bore being so many hours from town?"

She acquiesced plaintively, although in point of fact she had never spent above a couple of days in London in her life, but she would have perished sooner than have admitted such a discreditable circumstance.

"But I suppose you find lots to do getting up school-treats and looking after the old women," continued her companion, with patronising kindness.

"Indeed, I don't!" flared up Laura, for once speaking the literal truth. "I don't go in for that sort of thing at all!"

"Really! I always imagined that young ladies in the country spent most of their time distributing cans of soup and collecting clothing club tickets! Do you actually mean to say you are an exception to this rule? Then may I ask who looks after these things; for I presume they flourish in your parish even though you hold yourself aloof from them?"

"The schoolmistress manages it, I suppose. I take no interest in such matters."

This conversation was by no means to Laura's taste. She began to dislike her companion and his tacit assumption that her interests must necessarily be confined to the working of small local charities merely because she had the misfortune to be a clergyman's daughter.

There were times when she regarded her position as a subject for sincere self-congratulation; when the old vicarage seemed but the natural stepping-stone to an episcopal palace and a vaguely glorious future. But to-day she had for the first time a mortifying consciousness that this was not the light in which it struck strangers. She immensely resented having the conversation adapted to what were conceived to be her legitimate interests.

Things were at a standstill. Laura was sighing to acquire some information relative to the brilliant strangers who were staying at the Hall, but she was far too proud to ask any direct questions upon the subject. The conversation languished. Very shortly she was deserted by the stout gentleman, who always afterwards cited her as a notable example of the hopeless stolidity of even the prettiest provincial belles.

"She's very heavy," he remarked confidentially, on rejoining his hostess. "I couldn't stand her for long—no fun at all, you know; I got nothing out of her."

"Really! But you can't expect everything! Being incontestably the best looking girl present, perhaps she thinks it unfair that she should also have to supply all the wits of the party!"

The upshot of this little skirmish was altogether advantageous to our heroine. Actuated by a noble spirit of opposition, Miss Coventry promptly invited her to join a select party that was starting to see the garden, and for the next hour she had the felicity of wandering through interminable greenhouses in the company of a deaf old lady and her daughters.

"But the great thing is to be seen with the right people," as Laura wisely reflected. And one's first conversation with a dowager countess certainly marks an era in one's life.

Miss Coventry was not of the party, having yielded easily to the old lady's representation that she ought to stay with the rest of the guests. Her absence facilitated an obviously pre-arranged scheme

on the part of the visitors, who begged the gardener to give them "just" a root, a sucker, or a cutting of every plant of the least value.

"I am very fond of a garden," explained the old lady; "but I have no notion of giving ridiculous prices for new specimens, like some people! My plan is to collect a bit here and a bit there, as I go about. It's wonderful what it saves in the year, and it is so much more sensible!"

So thought Laura; but she had the wit to perceive that to conduct such a campaign with success one must first be a countess. On the whole, this walk was far the most enjoyable part of the afternoon. Her companions certainly did not exert themselves to entertain her, but on the other hand, they did not attempt to exclude her from their conversation. By the time she had heard the propriety of making some slight pecuniary acknowledgment to the gardener discussed in all its bearings by the three ladies, and the idea finally dismissed as being "quite unnecessary," she felt she had gained a certain insight into the habits of those favoured circles into which it was her one ambition to penetrate. She was not disillusionised by the discovery that an economical countess very much resembles anyone else with a taste for saving. She could even find excellent excuses for little eccentricities on the part of the aristocracy which she would never have advanced on behalf of a poor acquaintance.

As they completed the circuit of the last greenhouse, they were suddenly confronted by Mr. Croft. This time he was quite alone, and had the expectant air of a person who is bent on attaining some definite object. At the mere sight of him Laura felt a revival of all her old doubts and waverings, and she hastily resolved to avoid anything like a private interview. Unfortunately for the success of this plan, she could not very well push past the other ladies, and escape from the greenhouse before them. She was obliged to wait patiently until the last, and then in her confusion she shut her dress into the doorway and had the mortification of seeing the rest of the party walk on with the utmost unconcern, whilst with great deliberation Mr. Croft released her from imprisonment.

"I can hardly expect you to believe me," he began gravely; "but it is nevertheless true, that you slammed the door yourself, and I had nothing to do with it!"

"Did I?" answered Laura, so preoccupied with calculating her chances of escape that she scarcely heard what he was saying. Her only anxiety was to get within earshot of the others with the least possible delay.

"We seem to have shaken off all the old women at last," resumed Mr. Croft, looking furtively round. "I thought we should never get rid of them!"

It can easily be imagined that this remark was eminently fitted to irritate Miss Leslie. The implied unity of purpose, and the reckless

classification of Mrs. Hall and the Countess under the same head-alike affronted her susceptibilities.

"This wretched party has been a regular fraud," he continued, perfectly unconscious of offence. "I did not waste a whole afternoon merely for the pleasure of taking a prolonged stroll with Mrs. Hall!"

"Indeed! What did you expect?" replied Laura, more for the sake of saying something than with any real curiosity to hear his answer. No sooner were the words spoken than she realised her folly in giving him such an opening.

"Now, Miss Leslie," he began, and the very tone of his voice warned her of danger, "that question is really a trifle unimaginative! You must know that I had every reason to expect a very much pleasanter afternoon than I have yet had!"

Laura could not trust herself to speak. If she had only disliked Mr. Croft, it would all have been so beautifully simple. But she felt more strongly every moment that she liked him only too well, and that her sole chance of safety lay in flight. If she listened to him she knew that she should yield at once, even though she might regret it all the rest of her life. At this critical juncture, she was joined by an unexpected auxiliary in the shape of the stout major, who arrived, rather cross and breathless with his hurried pursuit.

"Miss Coventry sent me to look for you," he panted. "She wants to know if you will have some tea. I thought I should never find you," he added testily. "I wonder why ladies always wander to the farthest point from the refreshments?"

"I am going home," announced Mr. Croft, curtly. "I have had quite enough of this. Shall you come?"

"Of course not," said Laura, relaxing into her first smile at the immediate prospect of relief. "I am enjoying myself immensely; but garden-parties are only amusing when one knows everybody."

She enunciated this maxim with much greater boldness than she would have done an hour before; but her recent experiences had been of an inspiriting nature. To be the object of a special embassy from her hostess was in itself no slight mark of distinction. Who would have credited Miss Coventry with so much care for the welfare of her guests! The fact that Mr. Croft had turned away with an exclamation of ill-concealed impatience in no wise damped her spirits. She was only glad to be released from the constraint of his presence and left free to pursue her little ambitious schemes without risk of exciting his ridicule.

At last the long afternoon came to an end. The guests dispersed slowly, not knowing when they might again have the chance of inspecting the glories of the Hall. The majority were delighted with their reception, and Sir Gilbert's affability threatened to become a standard topic of conversation in the neighbourhood. Not so much was said about Miss Coventry. It was generally agreed that she was very

proud, and though this was admitted to be a suitable weakness in the daughter of a baronet, still it naturally precluded enthusiasm on the part of social inferiors.

As for Laura, she returned home radiant. Miss Coventry had so far unbent at parting as to murmur a vague hope that they would now see more of each other—words which filled her hearer with the wildest dreams of future bliss. All trifling annoyances were forgotten in the face of the brilliant prospect now opening before her.

No wonder she looked even prettier than usual, as with glowing cheeks she bounded into the old-fashioned drawing-room in search of her father. True, he was not by any means a sympathetic listener, nor was his daughter at all in the habit of confiding in him her hopes and fears; one reason for her reticence being, perhaps, an innate consciousness that in most cases they took diametrically opposite views of a subject. Be that as it may, there are moments when the most self-contained feel more expansive than usual, and it was with a sense of real disappointment that she glanced round the room and found it empty. Not quite empty, though! Someone started up from a dark corner and seized her hand with a low cry of admiration.

"Oh, Laura! Have you come to make me happy at last?" Then she found herself encircled by a strong arm, and drawn close to Mr. Croft's side in a lover-like embrace, which, for the moment, admitted of no resistance.

It is necessary to explain this extraordinary proceeding by stating briefly that the unfortunate man had been awaiting her return for nearly an hour, during which period he had ample time to persuade himself that he was really very much in love with Laura, as well as irretrievably committed to making her an offer. As to her feelings, he had some excuse for imagining that she had betrayed them pretty clearly. He completely misunderstood her flushed cheeks and air of joyous excitement, attributing it wholly to her unfeigned delight at his presence.

"How lovely you are," he exclaimed, stroking her golden hair. "Why didn't you tell me before? Why have we wasted all this time without understanding each other?"

For one long moment Laura yielded to the situation. It seemed so fatally easy to acquiesce in this arrangement, and thus for ever end her difficulties. Then suddenly consciousness returned with a rush and she tore herself away.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" she stammered out at last. Her sole chance of not breaking down hopelessly was to affect an amount of indignation which she was very far from feeling. "I never gave you the right to do anything of the kind!"

"No, I know you have not. I am very sorry," returned Mr. Croft humbly. Probably he had been too precipitate and had alarmed the

sensitive girl. "I always was such a fool about this kind of thing!' he reflected. At the same time he could not help noticing that Laura looked much more attractive than usual in her excitement. He did not attach the slightest importance to her vehement protestations, concluding that they were only the result of shyness, which would easily yield to a little judicious coaxing.

"I am sorry you were startled," he began again in rather a subdued tone. "I thought you understood me yesterday, and had recognised my numerous efforts to speak to you this afternoon. In fact I was vain enough for a moment to fancy that you were looking forward to this meeting as much as I was."

No responsive smile appeared on Laura's face. The soft dimples had stiffened into hard, resolute lines. The white brow was puckered with intensity of thought. She was making up her mind to resist all weakness, however much the resolution might cost her.

She was for the first time called on to act up to her principles, and an unexpected obstacle had arisen in the shape of a traitor in the camp. For a few seconds it was a hard struggle between brain and heart; but as might have been anticipated from Laura's antecedents, the brain came off completely victorious.

"I cannot imagine what you are alluding to, Mr. Croft," she began with metallic politeness. "You seem to be labouring under some extraordinary delusion respecting our relative positions. But I am willing to accept your apology on the understanding that you never revert to the subject. Good-bye."

"Nonsense! You must wait and hear me out." And Mr. Croft slammed the door with rather more violence than was absolutely necessary. "To the best of my abilities I made you an offer yesterday, and I was under the impression that you had practically accepted me. You must forgive me if I acted on this assumption. But, oh, Laura!" he continued with a sudden collapse of formality, "didn't you ever mean it?"

"No, never. Don't you see there are insuperable difficulties in your position—and the farm—and everything," concluded Laura rather limply. Her chief desire was to bring the interview to an end without a direct explanation. But this was not to be.

"Oh, you don't like the farm? Well, I don't blame you for that. I am getting rather tired of it myself, and I shall not be at all averse to moving on if I can take you with me! So the insuperable objections have already vanished into thin air!"

"What hopeless denseness men invariably display if one attempts to hint at anything disagreeable!" thought Laura. "It is a simple waste of time trying to spare their feelings."

"You misunderstand me," she said. "You have been very kind to my father, which I shall never forget. As for myself, every position has its obligations, and I am sure that I should find no happiness in forgetting them!"

"I am afraid you must think me very slow, but candidly I am completely mystified! Your position, you say, will not permit you to marry?"

"Out of my class!" rejoined Laura impatiently. "Imagine what my friends—what Miss Coventry, for instance—would think if I married someone they could not recognise! Oh, I might be fond of you, but I could never survive such a disgrace!"

This statement had at least the merit of extreme lucidity. It penetrated even Mr. Croft's dense armour of unconscious complacency. For the first time he saw the situation from Laura's point of view. He remained silent for awhile, busily engaged in re-adjusting his impressions of the female sex. Laura stood, red and miserable, in the middle of the room, feverishly twisting her handkerchief in her trembling fingers. She had never contemplated speaking with such brutal directness. The truth had slipped out unawares. But she would not withdraw a word. Besides, it was now too late. Mr. Croft was taking leave of her. A few conventional parting phrases, and he was gone; his presence already nothing but a memory.

"I certainly put him in his place that time," muttered Laura. But the would-be triumphant words died away upon her lips, and it was with a very sad face that she presently crept up to her room. There was little fear, after this last rebuff, that Mr. Croft would again venture to take any liberties. In spite of this exhilarating reflection, she felt unaccountably depressed. Even the indisputable beauty of the new hat failed to extract a smile. Still it was characteristic of the girl, that notwithstanding a good deal of genuine emotion, she mechanically performed all her usual observances with regard to new clothes; making them the subject of much minute study in the looking-glass before carefully packing them away in their respective boxes for the night.

Things looked much brighter next morning. Laura was quite herself again, and comfortably convinced that she had acted all along with her invariable good common-sense. She was a little ashamed of her past weakness, and blushed as she recalled her narrow escape of committing a sentimental folly. In future she would be careful to avoid such pitfalls, and interest herself solely in the steady pursuit of social advancement. As a preliminary step she must at once cement her friendship with Miss Coventry. Theoretically, it seemed such a natural arrangement that two lonely, motherless girls, living within half a mile of each other, should be inseparable companions. Practically, they had hitherto seen little more of each other than if they resided on different continents. Still there seemed a promise of better things in Miss Coventry's parting speech. Perhaps this crisis was destined to be the turning-point of her career.

Laura hugged this idea during the succeeding weeks. Morning after morning she rose full of hope. Surely Miss Coventry would call or possibly invite her to spend the day by way of inaugurating

their new intimacy. Of course she did not neglect the obvious step of calling at the Hall shortly after the party. She was rewarded by the information that Miss Coventry was out—a statement which was evidently veracious, as she was distinctly visible upon the tennis-lawn, surrounded by a laughing group of friends. Laura tried to console herself with the reflection that she had probably not been recognised at that distance. But, look at it which way she would, it was a disheartening incident and seemed to accentuate the gulf between Vicarage and Hall.

Judge, then, of Miss Leslie's excitement, when one afternoon, whilst sauntering listlessly back from an objectless stroll, she encountered a smart groom, in the well-known green livery, trotting jauntily down the moss-grown drive! Apparently the long-expected message had come at last. She would have run all the way up to the house but for a certain habitual self-consciousness, which led her to believe that the servant might suspect and ridicule her anxiety. After all, there was no need to hurry. Five minutes more and Laura was in the hall, contemplating with a blank countenance a card which lay upon the table. At first she almost doubted the evidence of her senses. A further examination proved that her apprehensions were only too well founded. There lay the card, clearly bearing the magic letters, P. P. C.!

For a moment Laura stood paralysed by this unexpected blow. Then she adopted the unprecedented course of going straight to her father's study. She found the old gentleman absorbed in the perusal of catalogues.

In the seclusion of his apartment, he relapsed frequently into the rusty black coat and easy carpet slippers which were now rigorously banished from the drawing-room.

He started guiltily at the entrance of his daughter, shuffling his feet under the table, in a vain hope of concealing some of the more obnoxious articles of his attire. Laura had hard work to speak respectfully as she took in the details of this homely scene. If carpet slippers could be annihilated by scornful glances, Mr. Leslie's old favourites would long since have ceased to exist.

"Look at this, papa!" And the important card went flying across the table amongst a forest of dusty papers and books.

"Well?"

Laura was maddened by the mildly interrogative tone and look.

"Well," she echoed, harshly. "Did you know that they were going away?"

"You mean the Coventrys?"

An impatient gesture was the only reply.

"Sir Gilbert gave me to understand as much last Board Day. He mentioned that his daughter's health caused him some anxiety, and he talked of spending the winter abroad to avoid the damp——"

"The Hall is not damp, and Miss Coventry is as strong as I am,"

interrupted Laura, dogmatically. "And why did you say nothing about it?"

"You never asked me, my dear."

Argument with this impracticable old gentleman was a sheer waste of time. Laura left the room, choking ostentatiously at the smoke curling up from her father's pipe. It was probably mere scandal that attributed the Vicar's daily increasing fondness for tobacco to the fact that his daughter had an unconquerable aversion to the smell. But perhaps we shall be justified in assuming that he did not altogether regret the circumstance which deprived him of her company during a considerable portion of the day.

So ended Laura's sanguine dream. It would be difficult to describe what a blank the absence of the Coventrys created in her life. It was certainly not owing to the frequency of their meetings. But lately her imagination had been exclusively engrossed with various brilliant plans, all turning on her projected intimacy with the Hall party. These were now necessarily at an end. Her social efforts were evidently not destined to be successful, and she had no home interests to fall back upon. Life for the future threatened to be an interminable succession of monotonous duties grudgingly performed.

To crown her vexations came the news that Mr. Croft had left the neighbourhood for an indefinite time, probably for months, as he had installed the bailiff in the farm-house. True, she had rejected him in most insulting terms, and still daily repeated that she did not regret having done so. Nevertheless she felt that the bare chance of an occasional meeting during the deadly dulness of the long winter would be a pleasing excitement. Of course she would never again run the risk of encouraging him too much. Still, at times she positively yearned for any variety on her present existence.

Laura meditated profoundly over the past during her long walks about the frost-bound lanes (for though she loathed country walks, she was far too sensible to stay indoors, realising fully how much health and a good complexion depend upon regular exercise). She was consistently positive that she had acted with the utmost discretion in remaining true to her ideal match. But where was the reward of virtue? When would the fairy prince appear upon the scene?

As time wore on her position became more and more intolerable. She had never made any secret of her contempt for such society as the village afforded. Still it was with a certain shock that she found herself excluded from all the little friendly Christmas gatherings. At least she would have liked her absence to be optional! But some acute local intellect had penetrated Miss Leslie's design of holding herself aloof, and it was unanimously decided not to give her the chance of refusing invitations.

So the weeks dragged on. The intolerable monotony of a long frost was only relieved by an occasional half-hearted thaw. About

once a week the barometer promised a change of weather, which, after much indecision, usually took the form of a heavy fall of snow. Then as a rule the temperature rose for a few hours and the surface of the earth was reduced to slush. After which it invariably froze again harder than ever.

But towards the end of February the change came. The air felt soft and caressing. Unsuspected patches of snowdrops cropped up in all the odd corners. The worms emerged from their enforced retirement, and were welcomed without a moment's delay by the ever watchful blackbirds.

Though Miss Leslie cared very little about flowers or birds, and absolutely ignored the existence of worms, she was infected by the general atmosphere of hopefulness. Surely the spring must bring some change into her life also. Unconsciously she lived in a state of perpetual expectation. It seemed quite natural that her father should enter the room one evening a little more briskly than usual, announcing, as he took his seat at the end of the table, that he had just heard some news.

"You sometimes complain that I live too exclusively in my books, my dear; but I have been beforehand with you this time."

"What is this wonderful event? Is your new school-mistress going to leave, or ——"

"Nothing of the sort," interrupted the old gentleman, chuckling softly at the excellent joke he had in store for his daughter. "Guess again! I will give you a clue; it concerns Miss Coventry."

"She is going to be married."

"Dear me! Ladies seem to divine these things by intuition," observed Mr. Leslie, helping himself pensively to a cutlet. "Very extraordinary! Now no *man* would have thought of that."

"A good match, of course?"

The Vicar assented with a cheerful nod. "Very good, I should say."

A long pause followed this statement, during which Laura envied Miss Coventry from the bottom of her heart.

"Well, my dear, what do you think of my news?" said her father at last. He seemed strangely elated at being in the unusual position of communicating a piece of gossip.

"I think some people have all the luck," replied Laura, wearily. "Did you hear the man's name?"

"Ah, capital! Now we have come to it at last. You must positively guess the name ——"

"But I know so few of the Coventrys' friends," interrupted Laura, impatiently. "It is not that fat old major who was at the garden party? He looked at her a good deal, I noticed."

"No! no!" broke out the Vicar, unable any longer to contain his excitement. "What do you say to our friend Croft being the happy man?"

For one moment Laura suspected that her excellent parent had broken through the traditions of a lifetime, and made a joke. A glance reassured her upon this point. He was evidently stating a sober fact.

"But you said it was a good match!" was all she could gasp.

"So people seem to think it, now that he has come into his cousin's property. The cousin was a bachelor, and died at Rome of fever, and Croft comes into ten thousand a-year. For my part, I always considered him a very companionable young man," concluded the Vicar, testily. His piece of news had failed to elicit the exclamations of delight he had anticipated.

"Has she known him long?" inquired Laura, faintly.

"Some time, I believe. I hardly like to repeat such gossip, but they say that Miss Coventry only came down to the Hall for the summer because she heard that Mr. Croft was in the neighbourhood; but ——"

"And have you known all along that he was an acquaintance of the Coventrys?" interrupted Miss Leslie, sternly.

"Yes, I suppose so, my dear. At least I don't think he ever made any secret of it, though he did not seem very interested in them at that time, as far as I noticed."

"Oh, why did you never tell me?" she muttered, in a tone of condensed rage.

"My dear, I do not remember that you ever asked me the question," answered her father, simply.

Laura sat quite still, her face growing harder and paler every moment. She felt too sick for further argument or recrimination. Her past seemed illuminated by a lightning-flash.

"I loved him all along," she thought, with despair. "I know it now that it is too late; I sacrificed everything to my miserable ambition, and now I am to be punished for it all the rest of my life."

For Laura had no illusions on the subject. She felt with all the force of conviction that as far as she was concerned the fairy prince had come and gone, and in spite of all her careful scheming, she knew that she had missed her only chance!

THE FIFTH OF MAY.

Manzoni's Ode to Napoleon.

He was: as silent as the clay,
Its mortal anguish o'er,
From whence the spirit passed away
To the eternal shore—
So still stood worlds, aghast to hear
The tidings of death's messenger:
Mute—pondering on that final hour—
Doubting if e'er again
Earth should behold so grand a power,
So great a king of men;
Or tread of lordlier footstep e'er
Trample the dust that crumbles there.

To him on his imperial throne
I turned no flatterer's face,
The goal might be or lost or won
In life's uncertain race;
With myriad sounding tongues my voice
Disdained to wail or to rejoice:
Unmoved to servile note of praise,
From coward censure far,
My lyre now thrills to mournful lays
At fall of such a star;
And a funereal melody
Awakes, that haply will not die.

From farthest Alp to Pyramid,
From Spain to Rhenish strand,
War's thunderbolts and lightnings slid
From his uplifted hand;
Pursuing swiftly in his train,
From realm to realm, from main to main.
Was this true glory? Let the days
To come pass sentence: we
Can but bow down before His ways,
To His supreme decree,
Who willed such sign in wondrous hour
Of his Creative Spirit's power.

The fitful joy, the lofty scheme,
Fame's fleeting, maddening breath,
Ambitious, wild, tumultuous dream,
The crown, the victor's wreath:
Such prize attained, none might foresee,
In fondest flight of fantasy!
All this was his! the kingly sway,
The pride of perils past,
The closing of the shadowed day,
The exile's grave at last!
Twice in the dust—disown'd—denied—
Twice chosen—worshipp'd—deified!

His voice was heard, uprais'd between
  Two armëd centuries;
The doom of warring worlds was seen
  In his controlling eyes.
They bent, as if to fate, to hear
The fiat of their arbiter.
As sudden meteors fall—he fell!
  Lay caged in prison bound;
The mark of hate inexorable—
  Pity—immense—profound.
Of loyalty no chance could move,
Belief profound, undaunted love.

As on the drowning wretch's head
  There falls the rolling wave,
Pressing him down to icy bed,
  Where there is none to save;
But still his wild despairing eyes
Appeal for aid to seas and skies—
So on that weary, struggling soul
  Pale phantoms crowded fast,
Whilst memory would fain unrol
  The record of the past.
But from the page, resistless tears
Would blot the tale of bygone years.

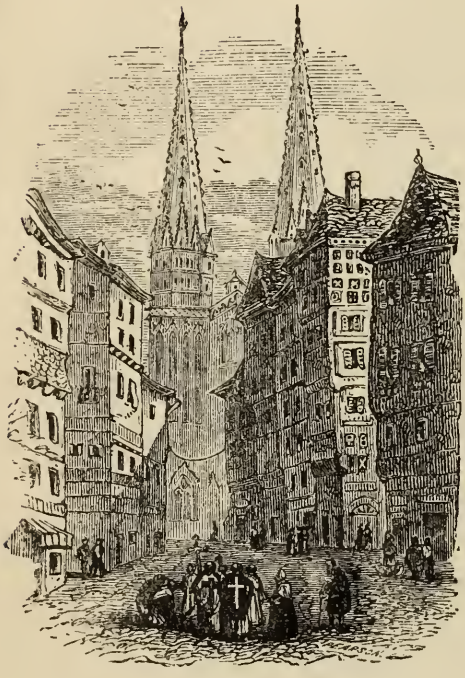
Alas! how oft at eventide,
  Deserted, mock'd, opprest,
He stood, eyes bent on ocean wide,
  Arms folded on his breast,
Whilst memory to his backward gaze,
Recalled the scenes of bygone days.
Once more, beholding tented plain
  And glittering ranks pass by;
Hearing the clash of arms again,
  The shout of victory;
Once more, a voice in stern command,
And swift response of heart and hand.

Break, tortur'd heart! the pitying hand
  That strikes and that consoles,
Thy name in the immortal land,
  Amongst His hosts enrols;
Where earthly glory fades away
Before the light of endless day.
God's pity bids the voices cease,
  Upraised in blame and wrath;
Strong in repentance, pardon, peace,
  He lies serene in death.
Sleeping—the cross above his breast,
Upon his desert couch of rest.

C. E. Meetkerke.

FAIR NORMANDY.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



Caen.

OUR regret at leaving Chartres was only one of several evils that arise from having a limited time at your command in going through any country. Many things have to be left undone; many spots must remain unexplored. The "accidents of travel" must be passed over; by which we mean, breaking our journey at places that never entered into our plans and calculation; places that we pass on the road and perhaps never heard of, but that look wonderfully inviting. It is a true sorrow to have to go on and leave we know not what of the beautiful, the rare and the unknown behind us.

Again it is possible to have to leave a place before you have grown familiar with it. Its influence is not yet upon you; has not sunk into the mind as a photograph, to remain your own for ever. You have not had time to study certain types of human nature that have strangely interested you; for this is a usual experience in travelling to everyone who does not keep himself unsociably exclusive. Of course it necessitates familiarity with the language of the country; without which, no matter where you are, you will feel very much as a mariner at sea without a compass.

And, abroad, the study of human nature is made easy by the temperament of the people. They meet you much more than half way; open their hearts and minds to you; give you their confidences—and do not in the least expect yours in return, which is a great thing. It is their rule to talk, and it does not in the least matter that they never saw you before and may never see you again.

This is no doubt the better way of going through the world. It is making the most of life, which comes to no one a second time. It is not garrulity only which makes old age more talkative than youth, but experience. Only in England does this mantle of reservation fall upon one; this imposed silence. It is partly due to

the fact that the English are not conversational. They cannot "make talk," without an effort which, only too apparent, soon defeats itself. The thorough Englishman is grave and silent. But when a mixture of Celtic blood has been infused into his veins the strings of his tongue are loosened, his imagination becomes more lively, and he grows accessible.

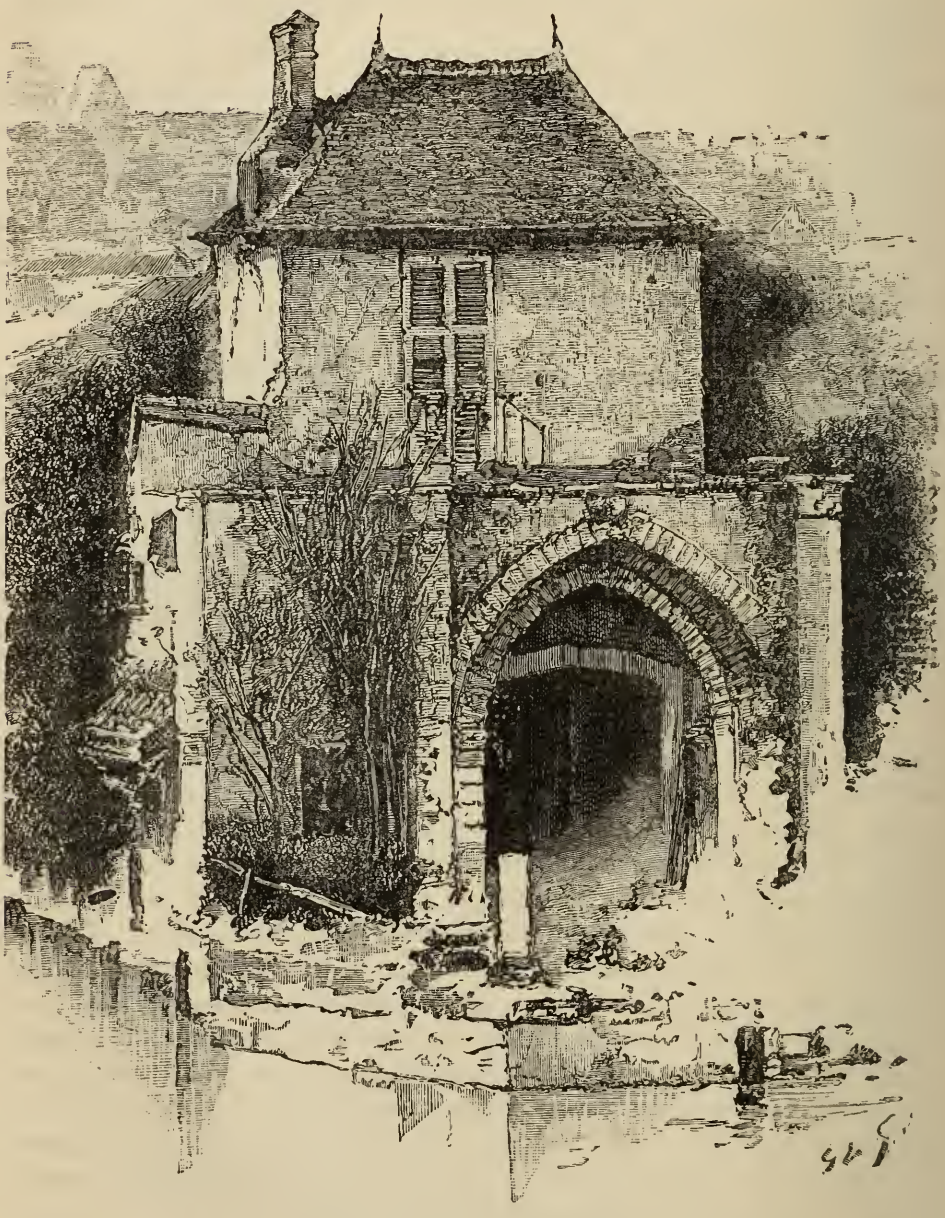
On leaving Chartres, we felt that we should like to know more both of place and people. We had again met the professors who had so puzzled us that first evening, and found them extremely agreeable men; almost too full of fun and liveliness for those who have to minister to youth. It is, however, only great minds that can unbend. To them, indeed, it is a necessity; and of them most emphatically it may be said, under certain conditions, "Once a child always a child." If mankind only realised it, this capacity for feeling yourself in touch with childhood and youth is a sure way of keeping your own heart green, your sympathies in order. When a man allows himself to grow old in thought and feeling, his work is done; life is over; there is nothing left but to calmly await the summons to the Everlasting Regions, where alone his youth can be restored.

As we steamed away from Chartres, it looked more picturesque than ever. It was such a strange mixture of youth and age; the lively and the sublime; the unbending and the severe. The river wound its course round the town and through the vast plains. Its banks under the very shadow of the cathedral were as perfect as anything we had seen. It was crossed by ancient bridges; forges and small factories and antiquated houses found their reflections upon the water; as did the graceful and overhanging trees—the weeping willow and drooping birch and others, now changing to the tints of autumn; as did the wonderfully picturesque women kneeling in long rows before their washing-boards in white caps and Normandy handkerchiefs crossed over their shoulders; not so graceful as the trees, it must be admitted, but much more lively and interesting. But the trees, alas, have an advantage over them. It was autumn, and would soon be winter; and by-and-by, spring would come again and they would renew their youth. These fair women, youth once passed, would have no second spring. During our stay they had looked up at us with flashing eyes, as we pointed the camera at them, and their laughter would ripple out, and carry itself far down the stream, and here and there—rare occurrence—a pearly set of teeth would be disclosed. For as a rule these people, men and women, lose their teeth almost in their first youth.

All this was over. The beautiful hill rose upwards, crowned by those matchless spires, for which the blue sky overhead seemed a fitting canopy. Sunshine sparkled over all; the world was fair and beautiful; life an ecstasy. It always must be so at these moments, when under the influence of all that is brightest and best in creation. It is then that we most realise how glorious life is; most feel that

nothing but these "earthly chains" keep the soul from that "dread apocalypse" which must one day send it on its long unknown journey.

We were on our road to Caen, and if anything could reconcile us



OLD GATEWAY, CHARTRES.

to a premature departure from Chartres, it was this. For no town in Normandy possesses greater attractions, and to some it is more interesting even than Rouen itself.

Our way lay in and about very pretty and picturesque country We passed through rugged cuttings, through wide and fertile plains,

where rivers ran their winding course. There were fruit-laden orchards without number; trees bending under the weight of apples that would soon be transferred to the crushing stone and turned into cider; which, as a Scotchman remarked to us at dinner a few evenings later on, was "very poor stuff for the constitution." No doubt it was especially so to him, who, judging by his complexion, was accustomed to stronger waters than those distilled in the cider mills of Normandy.

The orchards looked very lovely, the apples very tempting, as we passed through them that sunny day. They were all about our path, on the right hand and on the left. Farms and farm buildings nestled in the midst of this peace and plenty. A calm and happy existence it must be for these people, who have no consciousness of the possibilities of a life beyond; the sweets and the snares of the greater world, with its phantoms and delusions. They know nothing of the fever of life. It is a sort of Eden existence; and if the serpent has entered in, he has less power to tempt; his poison is less subtle.

Very calm it looked, this sunny day, when there was just that suspicion of melancholy over all that the first days of autumn inevitably bring with them.

Here and there hill-sides rose beyond the valleys covered with a wealth of changing verdure. The country was made more beautiful, very English in aspect, by the intersecting hedges, so rarely seen in France out of Normandy. But in England we have not this long succession of orchards, which give Normandy its type; just as the hop-gardens do to certain parts of England, the lovely and luscious vineyards to the Sunny South.

So the hours passed in travelling were not the least agreeable of our experiences in Fair Normandy.

H. C.'s nine-and-twenty packages had not increased on this occasion; but it was no fault of his. Chartres is behind the world in these matters. There were two ancient shops near the cathedral, but they contained such a collection of rubbish that a moment's inspection in each was sufficient. He left Chartres mentally braced, as everyone must be who gazes upon the wonders of the cathedral. Even the superstitious atmosphere of the Black Virgin and the substantial charms of our worthy female guide went for something. But in actual possessions he was none the richer. He had not added to his griffins, his gurgoyles, his pottery and porcelain—for nothing comes amiss to his mania for collection if it is only sufficiently old and ugly; and his recherché London flat, and his little country shooting box, are simply small South Kensington Museums, which might be cited as specimens in a work on "Mediæval and other Antiquities."

When we reached Caen the shades of night were falling. It was rather a long drive from the railway station to the heart of the town, and we freighted one of the omnibuses, which rattled off in the usual

style. H. C.'s nine-and-twenty packages began a tournament with each other, and it took him all his time to keep them out of danger and prevent disastrous collisions.

On a previous visit we had "descended" at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, supposed to be the best in Caen; but the rooms had been so close, the cleanliness so questionable, that on this occasion we chose the Hôtel de la Place Royale. At least it stood in the large open square, where one felt it possible to breathe. We had not breathed on the former occasion, but had almost died of suffocation.

The present inn was worth a visit, if only out of curiosity. We were given a double room looking on to the square: an outer and an inner room, for which we drew lots. The inner room fell to H. C., and it was so dark at midday that candles had to be lighted before he could contemplate the ravages made by chocolate upon his complexion. In Majorca he had been the victim of mosquitos and anisette; the anisette supplied by the old man of the sea in his boat, on the occasion of our visit to the caves of Manacor—as the reader may remember if he chanced to accompany us to that rare and radiant little island. Here, in Normandy, he was the victim of chocolate and absinthe; for which destructive beverage he developed a greater liking the deeper we penetrated into the country. Separately, each is sufficiently unwholesome; together, they are fatal.

But to go back to the hotel—for the pen is like a geographical index, and in a moment you may pass from Madagascar to Malaga—from Majorca to Caen.

We reached our room peculiarly and under difficulties.

A small, winding wooden staircase led up to the first floor—in fact ended there. The staircase was open to the small courtyard and a few ferns and plants that grew about. It was not unpicturesque. You might stand at the top of the staircase, and looking down contemplate monsieur in his bureau, his bald but shapely head superintending the weighty matters of his *caisse*. Every now and then madame would appear on the scene, no doubt with some command for her lord and master—or in other words, her most obedient slave. We will not describe her charms; the pen has its limits, and we must draw the line; the reader shall imagine them.

Here, also, we took no liberties. We neither intruded into the kitchen nor sought the chef. The delightful primitiveness of Evreux and Chartres—so refreshing to one's spirit after the magnificence of "Grand Hôtels" and "Hôtels Splendides"—had not followed us to Caen. Here we had to return to the ordinary ways of the world. The kitchen and the chef no doubt existed, but we had to imagine them—as the reader by this time has imagined the charms of madame.

At the top of the little winding staircase you passed down a narrow passage, open to the sky on one side. Immediately underneath, forming part and parcel of the house, were the stables. They were

too close to be pleasant, and we thought it the most singular arrangement we had ever seen or heard of. In Ireland the pig forms an honoured part of the household—and very properly, as he is supposed to pay the rent; but we had never yet come across an hotel in Normandy in which the horses were placed on the same footing as the Irish pig. However, beyond a slight inconvenience in passing and repassing to our room, the Normandy horse proved in no sense of the word disagreeable. I doubt if we could say as much for the Irish household.

The landlord of the hotel was very civil and obliging, but he could not give us very much of his time. He had too much to do, and was a busier if not a greater personage than our hosts of Evreux and Chartres. He might be seen in ten different places at once—we do not pretend to explain the miracle: it is enough to record it—guiding, directing, ordering; sometimes scolding—though never madame. The table-d'hôte was inferior to that of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, but there must always be some reservation wherever you go: and we prefer fresh air to the pleasures of the table, which after all are insidious.

The company was much more numerous at the Hôtel Royale, but on the other hand not so "select." At the Hôtel d'Angleterre it had been very exclusive: an old and very famous Abbé, and a great Personage of the town; the present writer and a certain H. of the Salamander species: the two latter winding and wending their way home from the Channel Islands. The Abbé, we remember, thoroughly enjoyed his dinner whilst reciting to his friend clever and comforting rhymes prophesying the approaching destruction of the world. These, however, in no way disturbed his appetite, nor took from the flavour of some excellent chartreuse that with coffee and cigarettes brought the repast to a very fine conclusion.

At the Place Royale the company was numerous and less select, but quite respectable. The waiters were discriminating too, and placed those who looked quietly inclined at the further end of the table, which formed three fourths of a square.

We were the only Englishmen present, with the exception of an artist who had been for some weeks at the inn, taking sketches in the neighbourhood, and was no doubt by this time looked upon as an old inhabitant. He sat in the very centre of the noisier group, evidently commercial travellers; looking, we thought, supremely uncomfortable. But perhaps we only gauged his feelings by what ours would have been under the circumstances. There were several military officers at table, by which we judged that the hotel was popular in the town.

But we have to do with the exterior of Caen rather than with any interior; and what charms we find there! It is different from Rouen in that it leaves more distinct pictures and impressions upon the mind. As a whole, the town may be less interesting, though we

doubt it, but there are a greater number of separate points on which to concentrate the attention. The interest of Rouen is more diffused, and takes longer time to be known. Caen is also, naturally, a less bustling town; there is more quietness and repose about it. It has a more ecclesiastical or monastical aspect; gives you more the feeling of a cathedral city—though it does not possess one—and is endowed with a more mediæval flavour.

The whole time we were in Caen we were overshadowed by this delightful and inspiring influence. The atmosphere of its past history clings to it with strange force. It seems to bring vividly before you all the grand old days and times of William the Conqueror, and is a strong link binding the place intimately with English interests and associations.

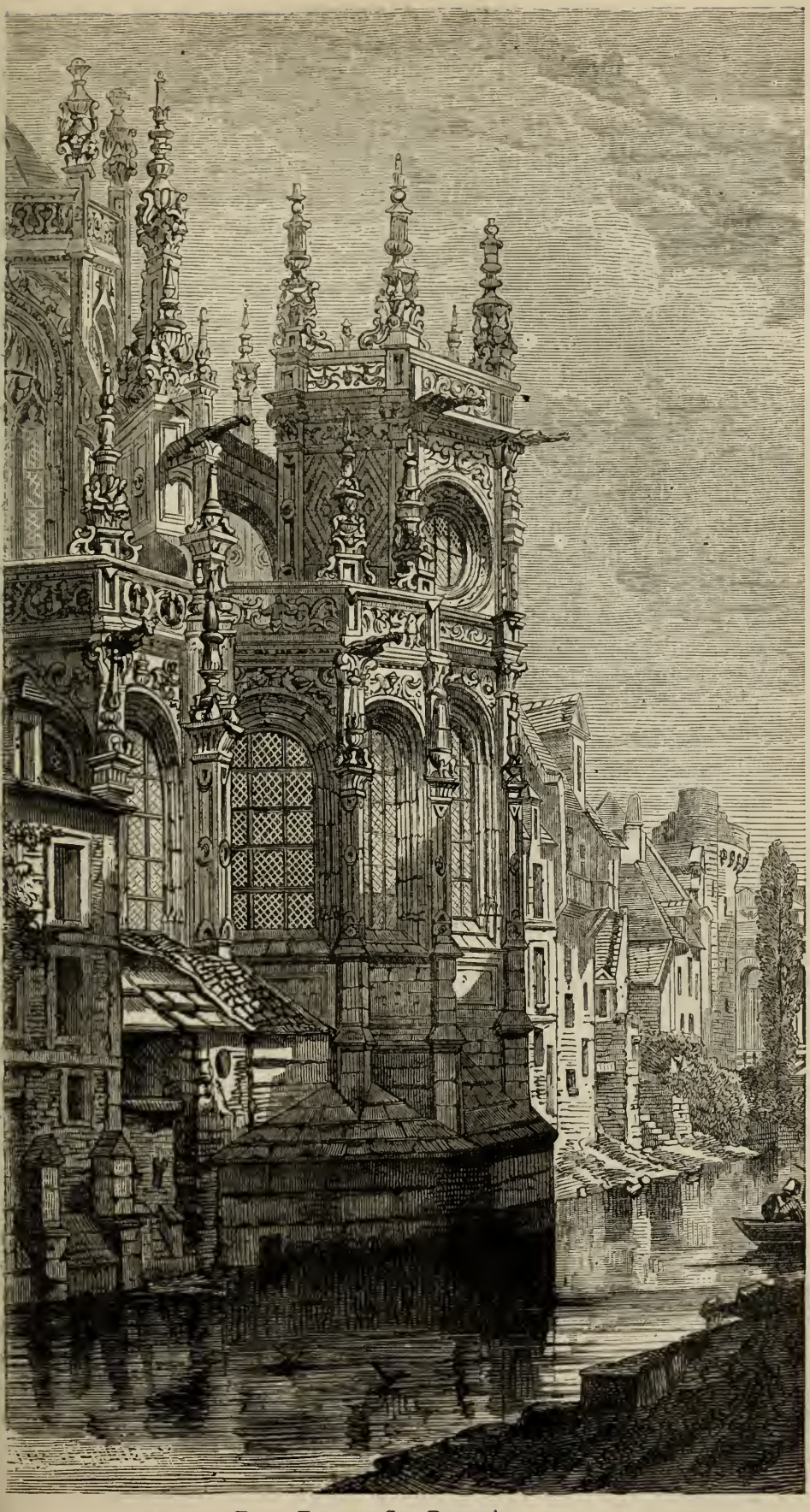
This interest is two-fold—historical and ecclesiastical; and the two are so bound together that you cannot separate the one from the other, or tell which is the greater.

The historical record comprises much that is most important in history: dating from the time when our country entered upon a new era, a new secular dispensation. If our eyes have wept tears at the death of Harold the Fair, last of the Saxon Kings, our hearts have also thrilled at the fine nature and brave deeds of William the Norman. The whole record is full of romance. For the ruggedness of the times has smoothed with the lapse of ages, and over all those days and events we throw something of the refinement of this nineteenth century.

In Caen, standing before his tomb, you seem to be brought face to face with him and the whole history of that time. All its battles and changes, its downfalls and uprisings, seem to pass before you in a succession of vivid mental pictures.

Caen has had a long and successful career, though it is shorn of some of its ancient greatness. It was formerly the capital of Lower Normandy, and is situated in the charming and fertile plains that constitute the principal wealth of the Department of Calvados. It owes much of its prosperity to the two rivers, the Orne and the Odon. It is only ten miles away from the sea, and at high water vessels of considerable tonnage can come up to its port, which is formed by the confluence of these rivers. The stream flows onwards through the town, and its banks, lined with fine trees, form a charming and popular promenade on a summer's evening. The declining sun lights up the water and glints through the whispering branches, and you may fall into contemplation and dream of the events of the last eight hundred years with which Caen is connected; muse over the loves of William and Matilda, their offence against the Church, and the glorious monuments that have come down to us to-day as peace offerings to his Holiness Pope Nicholas II.

We have said that Caen is full of this past atmosphere. As you walk its streets you are constantly coming upon ancient houses,



East End of St. Peter's.

gabled and latticed, and sometimes crumbling to ruin, which take you back to the days of the middle ages.

One in the Cour de la Monnaie hides its head from the casual pedestrian. You pass under a gateway and enter a small quadrangle or courtyard, and immediately are in a new and ancient world. This was formerly the Hôtel Valois, and is now the Exchange and Chamber of Commerce. It is a gothic building of extreme beauty, grey with age, ornamented with rich sculptures, amongst which one observes David and Judith. A short and graceful stone staircase leads to the interior. The windows are mullioned and have deep copings, and a small and beautiful turret rises in one of the angles.

No secular building in Caen is more interesting, and you return to it over and over again, charmed with its old-world atmosphere, all its beauty and refinement. It is given over to very different uses now from its original destiny, but the commercial affairs of Caen seem to be carried on in a quiet and leisurely manner, and the spirit of the building is little disturbed by those who go to and fro and occupy their business in the feverish ocean of stocks and shares. They seem to take things calmly, as if the daily fluctuations of the Money market could not affect them.

A very different building, and producing very different emotions, is a long, low house, in a quiet side street, gabled and timbered. It has a large doorway in the centre, and from this doorway issued in the days of the great revolution the small deformed figure of a woman. One sees a fixed resolve in her expression, and her feet tread the pavement with no uncertain sound.

Somehow, one always associates the image of Charlotte Corday with that of Joan of Arc. The one perhaps was moved by a spirit of fanaticism, the other by righteous anger and despair. The one was devoted to her king, the other to her country; but the same spirit of devotion moved both, the same desire to save and rescue and put an end to the destruction that was abroad.

Both women accomplished their purpose. Which required the greater courage? Charlotte Corday, without doubt. Joan was constantly spurred onwards by the fire of enthusiasm, the nobleness of her aim, the chivalry that surrounded her. She more publicly appealed to heaven, and the confidence which so often leads to success was hers. She was upheld by the excitement of movement and action, the fever of martial glory. The clashing of armour, the glancing of steel, the tread of horses, the worship of a multitude, all helped to strengthen her resolve, her belief in a divine mission.

But how different with Charlotte Corday. In the quietness of her room, probably in the dark hours of the night, she formed her resolution. Day after day the crying of the dying ascending to heaven grew louder in her ears, struck deeper to her heart. The red stream flowing from the terrible guillotine, the warm blood of the victims, seemed to coil itself about her, until it rose to a great

sea, which might engulph all France, and in which she herself seemed to be sinking.

The figure of Monsieur de Paris, as he stood out upon the terrible platform above the sea of surrounding and upturned faces in which horror seemed giving place to a dull apathy, haunted her night and day. She saw him directing the dreaded instrument; saw the glancing blade descending upon the neck of the unhappy Queen of France, the beautiful head roll into the sawdust and the once graceful and dignified body removed only to give place to another victim. She heard the rattling of the tumbrel through the streets of Paris, loaded with its despairing but still living freight. As it reached the place of execution, she saw a poor young mother, torn from her hearth—whose only crime was love for her husband and fidelity to a fallen house—throw her infant into the crowd to pitying arms outstretched to receive it, and then turn to the executioner and bid him do his work well and quickly, and end her misery. She saw those frightful men, fiends incarnate, who, like the beasts of the forest —all their savagery without their nobleness—seemed only to thirst for more blood, the more it flowed. Danton, Marat, and Robespierre: a trio and a combination of wickedness the world has seldom witnessed. She saw them as demons, and pictured them with cloven hoof and relentless expression. The cry that went up from so many hearts appealing to heaven for vengeance seemed to reach her; and she resolved that one of these fiends at least should die by her own hand.

It was a brave resolve, but she counted the cost. She knew that failure might possibly be the result; but be that as it might, that death to herself was almost a certainty.

And in the chill dawn of an early morning a small, solitary figure might have been seen issuing from that old doorway in Caen, the fire of a firm resolve, the light of hope, in her eyes. She started on her pilgrimage to Paris.

As she left the town behind her, its early smoke must have risen like incense towards heaven, and she, too, perhaps felt that her mission was holy. But no clashing of arms, no glitter of armour, no nodding of plumes and prancing of steeds, no shouting of soldiery, uplifted as one voice, strengthened her courage and seemed to pronounce a benediction upon her work, as in the case of Joan of Arc. The Maid of Orleans and the Maid of Caen were alike only in that the mission of each was one of mercy.

Sad and solitary and subdued, but undaunted, went the brave spirit of Charlotte Corday on her way towards the ill-fated capital. The laughing fields, the rich plains of Calvados, the blue heavens above—let us hope that these seemed to smile upon her, not to mock her by their celestial radiancy and calm. She had need of all her courage, of strength above that of woman.

She had left the smoke of Caen behind her, and we wonder with

what feelings she approached her journey's end, and saw the smoke of Paris in like manner ascending. Did it speak to her of incense? Was it red with the blood of un-numbered victims? Did it strengthen her resolve to accomplish her purpose or die in the attempt? It must have done so; or that frail woman would have faltered and failed in her purpose at the supreme moment. For we may make high resolves and have desperate courage on the eve of action; but it is only when face to face with the enemy, the roar of cannon in our ears and the flash of fire before our eyes, that we know how far we shall prove worthy or be found wanting.

We know the result. How her courage failed not, and success attended her; that weak woman's hand struck down the tyrant, and helped—we shall never know how much—to bring the Reign of Terror to a close. She buckled on no sword for the occasion and put on no armour; no artificial aid nerved her hand and sustained her courage.

So Rouen has its Joan of Arc and Caen its Charlotte Corday.

But Caen does not seem proud of the distinction. There is no statue to her memory, as far as I know, nor any street named after her. She lives only in her deed. But to us, as we gazed upon those windows whence she must often have looked upon the outer world, her spirit seemed to haunt the spot, her pale and remarkable face to peer out upon us from every pane.

It was a very quiet, deserted street; and this old house stood out amidst its more modern neighbours just as Charlotte herself must have stood out conspicuously above her contemporaries. True, the deed was assassination: murder, if you will: but was it not justified by the motive, atoned for by the result, if atonement were needed? What is war but assassination, where men for less cause single out each other for death; and the brave and the noble fall; and the fair locks that lately waved in the breeze lie low on the battle-field; and the frank voice, lately so full of light and laughter, is silenced for ever?

To us the spirit of Charlotte Corday haunts Caen quite as much as Joan of Arc haunts Rouen. But there is less of chivalry and romance about her, and she is less thought of by the world. She would not make the subject of a grand epic poem. Her deed was less stirring, her end less tragic. She has not been canonised by the church, or immortalised in song. But she was a great woman; and perhaps when the glamour of five centuries enfolds her name and deed, she too will be accorded by the Pope, and by universal consent, a place in the calendar of the saints.

But Caen has other influences: they are as diversified as they are numerous. Beyond and above all are her grand ecclesiastical monuments. In these she yields to none, and for our own part, when we gaze upon the Abbaye aux Hommes and the Abbaye aux Dames, we almost feel as if we had never before gazed upon the true splendour and perfection of architecture.

We spoke just now of the beauty and refinement of the Hôtel Valois. Turning from it, and passing through the gateway, you see before you the famous Church of St. Pierre. It is a gothic building, of various dates. The nave was constructed in the fourteenth and

OLD HOUSES, CAEN.

fifteenth centuries, and the choir probably at a not much later period, though it is more richly ornamented. The chapels behind the choir are still more elaborate, and the roofs are groined in the form of pendant fringes. The singular effect is heightened by the coloured windows, which subdue the light, and for modern windows are sufficiently good. The side walls are pierced with arches, filled in with

statues. These chapels are of the Renaissance period, the time of Francis I.

In the nave, the capitals of the columns are curious, representing subjects taken from history and mythology. These again were formed at a time when instruction was gained very much by the eye. On one column, for instance, Aristotle is seen walking on all fours and carrying upon his back the mistress of Alexander, who exacted as a penance that the philosopher should in this way conduct her to the palace. History records not how he had fallen under the lady's displeasure, but possibly for reproving her for her mode of life.

A second capital shows Tristan, one of the Knights of the Round Table, crossing the sea on his sword in the form of a wherry, in search of his wife Iseult, who is seen waiting for him with her dog on the opposite shore.

Again a third capital represents Virgil in a basket suspended from a wall. In the middle ages, the poet was looked upon as an enchanter or magician. He had given rendezvous to a Roman lady, and obtained permission only on condition that he should enter her house at night in the manner represented on the bas-relief. When the poet was half way up, the malicious dame arrested his progress and fastened the cord, leaving Virgil suspended in his basket; hovering, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth; to become the next morning the ridicule of the whole town of Rome.

In reading the polished verses of the poet, who thinks of him in the light of ridicule, or as paying court to Roman ladies? But human nature, like a well-cut diamond, has many facets, reflecting many lights and shades. Those who have read Lord Lytton's "Pelham" will remember a similar incident which befel his Professor, and was probably taken from the same source.

These are singular subjects for a church, but they were intended to fulfil a moral purpose. The representations from the ancient romances depict the follies and extravagances of love: works that were alone read in the age of chivalry: and it was to "point the moral" of these tales that the architect placed them upon the capitals.

The exterior of St. Peter's is more beautiful than the interior, though the latter is very harmonious. It is, however, deficient in possessing no transepts. But the exterior is marked by great richness of ornamentation, and has very much of the beauty of age. Its tone is extremely good. The tower to the right of the main portal is magnificent, and the spire above it, full of grace and beauty, has been favourably compared with Salisbury. It is of pierced stonework, surrounded by eight small turrets, very light and graceful, and is certainly one of the finest spires in France. The tower dates from 1308, and is pure gothic. The middle story is formed of lancet windows, framed within reeded mouldings, above which rise the graceful turrets. The height of the whole is about two hundred and fifty feet.

But the beauty of the church is its east end, with its flying but-

tresses, its gurgoyles, its turreted towers, its rounded windows, all ornamented with great richness of decoration. These find their reflection in the water which runs below. At least they did so at our first visit to Caen, but this has lately been altered, and there is no more water to be seen. In our illustration we represent it in its more picturesque aspect. Attached to the church are low, antiquated houses of every form, with gables, and red tiled roofs and dormer windows; a strange and not unpleasing mixture of the sacred and the secular.

But the pride and glory of Caen are its two churches, the Abbaye aux Hommes and the Abbaye aux Dames; the one erected by William the Conqueror, the other by Matilda; the one dedicated to St. Stephen, the other to the Trinity. They are at opposite ends of the town, as if guarding all that lies between them: throwing their influence upon its people, bidding them remember the shortness of life and the beauty of holiness. Let us first visit the Abbaye aux Hommes.

Leaving the church of St. Pierre, and passing down the street which bears its name—the principal street of Caen—you presently turn into a small square. Immediately in front of you stands the present Lycée, or Ecole Normale, a gothic building of the fourteenth century, and formerly the old Norman palace of the bishops. It is attached to the church, with which it forms two angles of the little square.

The west front of the Abbaye aux Hommes is all that can be seen of the church from this position. It is plain and severe almost to rudeness, almost to ugliness; but the west towers and spires that rise above it are stately and beautiful. Once within the church, you stand silent and amazed.

The interior is of vast proportions. Like the exterior it is plain almost to severity, disdaining all ornament; yet is it full of beauty, dignity and refinement; full of majesty and grandeur; full of repose. One feels how it would be spoilt by decoration. The eye scans the whole interior; no one point seems to arrest the attention above another; every portion stands out as perfectly as if we gazed upon its representation in a few feet of canvas.

One of its most striking features is its massiveness. It seems as if it might defy time itself, and would stand as long as the world lasts. It is in the Norman-Romanesque style, and the pillars and rounded arches once more charm by their bold and grand simplicity. The lower row of arches supports a gallery, above which again rise arches on a reduced scale. The gallery continues its way round the choir, and here the arches, of a later date, take the form of the pointed gothic. These are of the thirteenth century. One almost regrets the change of style; it is less simple and dignified; massiveness and grandeur give place to greater lightness, and perhaps to more refinement. Yet on looking down the nave from the west end, the effect of these arches is so beautiful that no place is

left for regret. The building is so vast, the choir looks so far off that almost it has the effect of gazing at a dream picture. Almost it seems as if the roof must open and admit a choir of angels to our wondering vision. The windows of the clerestory consist of alternate tall and short arches meeting the curve of the vault. The transepts end in galleries supported on circular arches.

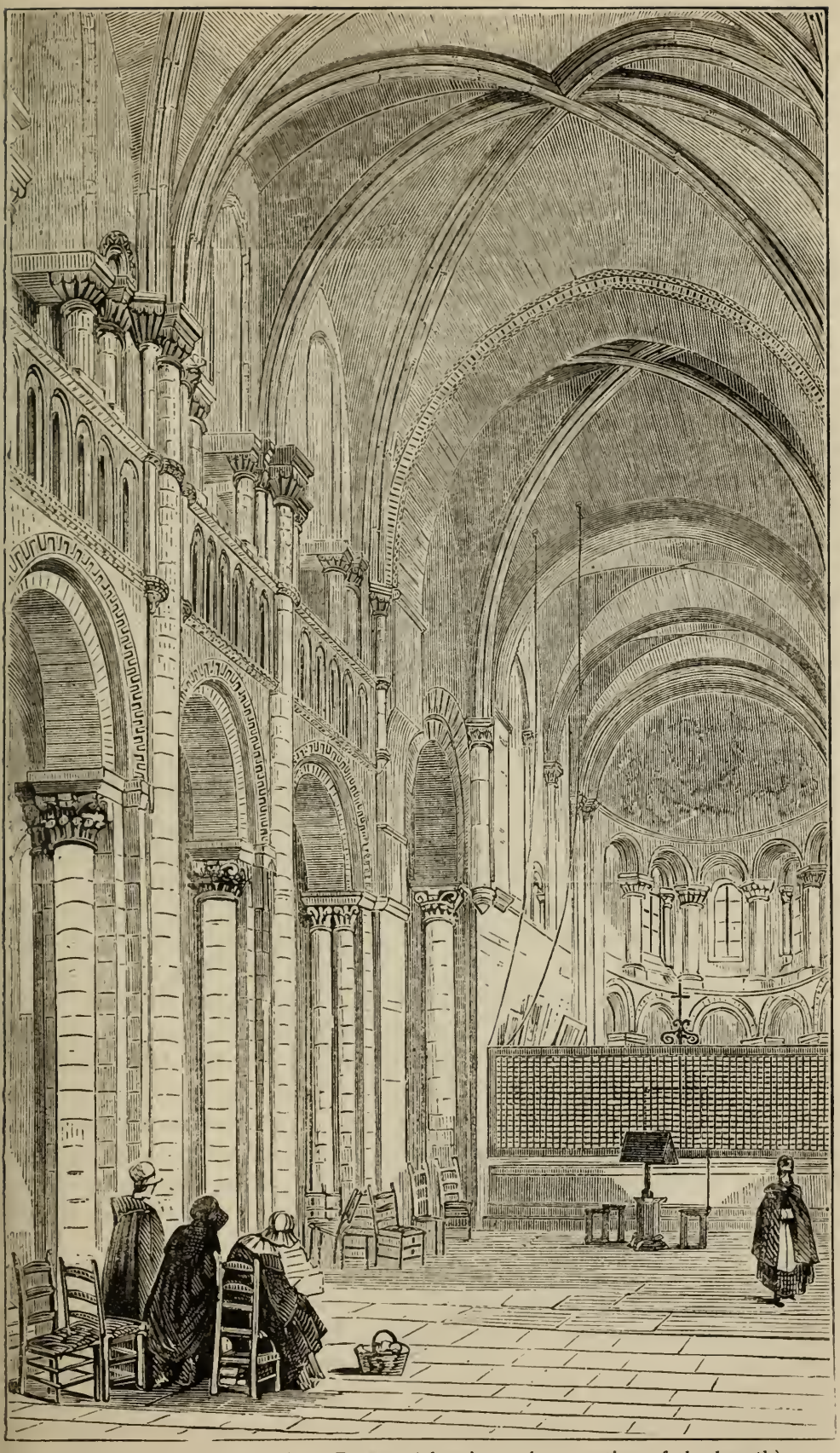
The church was begun by William the Conqueror in 1066, and was consecrated in 1077. The celebrated Lanfranc was its first Bishop. It was intended by William as a resting place for his remains, and here for many years they reposed. His tomb consists of a marble slab in front of the high altar, but the remains are no longer there. The magnificent monument erected by William Rufus was destroyed by the Huguenots in 1562, the tomb was desecrated and the bones were scattered. They were never recovered, with the exception of one thigh bone. This also disappeared in 1793, when the revolutionists again violated the tomb, and the last of the remains disappeared for ever.

The funeral of William the Conqueror—so uncertain is fate—was undertaken at the charity of an unknown knight, faithful to his master in death, as he had no doubt been in life. William had received fatal injuries at the sacking and burning of Mantes, and caused himself to be taken to the Priory of St. Gervais at Rouen, to die. This church is near the railway station, and is supposed to be the oldest church in Rouen, and one of the earliest Christian churches in France. Here, in the Priory, the Conqueror died. His sons and his friends immediately deserted him, his servants plundered him; and this single and solitary knight undertook the burial at his own charge, and escorted the body to Caen. It is sad that the knight's name has not been handed down to posterity. Fidelity is a rare virtue, and those who exercise it under exceptional circumstances are worthy of being immortalised.

The sacristy of the Abbaye aux Hommes was worth inspecting, and contained a portrait of the Conqueror, dating from about the fifteenth century. It represents a large man, without much refinement of feature, which is scarcely to be looked for, but with a determined will and a certain nobility of expression.

Not least interesting about the building was the old sexton, who conducted us both inside and out, and seemed devoted to his task. He discoursed eloquently upon the beauties of architecture, seemed to understand all its points, the periods of transition, the features of the different schools. He was a man of no little refinement, and evidently escorted us for love of the work, not for hope of reward. If he thought we had missed any special feature in our examination, nothing would satisfy him but we must go over the ground again, and pay our tribute of silent admiration to so much that was so simply and surpassingly grand and beautiful.

William the Conqueror was himself a man of no learning or



INTERIOR OF ABBAYE AUX DAMES (showing only a portion of the length).

education. Much of his success was probably the result of mere animal courage; but as far as we can gather, he had a great deal of that mental power that clear insight and quick decision so necessary in one who is to become a leader and commander of men. Perhaps it was because he was himself unlearned that he recognised its necessity in others. Be that as it may, the monastery of St. Etienne which he founded became celebrated from the days of Bishop Lanfranc, its first Abbot, for its wisdom. In the succeeding ages it sent forth men famous for their talents and virtues. St. Lanfranc opened a school in Caen, which produced scholars versed in science and literature: tastes which they spread not only throughout Normandy, but communicated to England. To this day Caen is famous for its university.

Let us pass to the Abbaye aux Dames, founded by Matilda, the worthy and august queen of William the Conqueror.

When William, Duke of Normandy, married his cousin, Matilda of Flanders, he set the laws of his church at defiance, for they were within the forbidden "degrees of consanguinity." A wise decree, that perhaps it would be well to revive in these days. This act offended Pope Nicholas the Second, and he would have annulled the marriage but that he feared to bring about a war between the Normans and the Flemish.

He therefore bade them each found a church in expiation of their crime; and posterity has ever since had reason to be grateful for the compromise. William founded the Abbaye aux Hommes, Matilda the Abbaye aux Dames. The former was a monastery, the latter a nunnery. The monastery has been turned into a Lycée, the nunnery into the Hôtel Dieu, or hospital of the town.

The Abbaye aux Dames was completed before the Abbaye aux Hommes, and was consecrated on June 10, 1066. The one was destined to hold the remains of William, the other of Matilda. The latter died first, and was buried with more pomp than her royal husband in the year 1083. But her remains were not to be held more sacred. The tomb was equally violated by the Huguenots in 1562. The remains of the Queen were carefully replaced by the Abbess Anne de Montmorency. In 1708 a second mausoleum was raised, which was overthrown by the revolutionists because it bore the Royal Arms of Normandy. The remains of the Queen, however, were respected, and in 1819 a third mausoleum was erected, which still remains.

The exterior of the church is fortunately better seen than that of the Abbaye aux Hommes, for it is beautiful and dignified. The style is the same—the Romanesque. The west doorway is Norman and very fine, and above it rise two square towers, with balustrades which were added in the eighteenth century. The spires have long disappeared, both of these towers and a third tower rising from the transepts.

Entering, the church has the same effect upon you as that of the Abbaye aux Hommes, but it is less severe, less destitute of ornament, and less massive. Therefore it looks lighter and more graceful, yet is full of dignity and repose. It is such a building as one might have expected from the feminine grace and taste of a queen ; the other bears every trace of a more masculine mind.

The whole interior is a marvel ; and, as when you gaze upon the interior of the Abbaye aux Hommes, so here you almost feel as if you looked for the first time upon what was most noble and most perfect in architecture. It is large, but not so large as the other Abbey. The piers are lighter, the pillars project more. An embattled fret relieves the main arches ; small galleries surmount the aisles ; the walls above the arches, instead of a triforium, have a blank continuous arcade of small circular arches which is extremely beautiful.

The choir is walled off from the nave, but is open at the upper part, above which may be seen the pillars supporting the beautiful Norman arches. This portion of the church is reserved to the nuns who nurse the sick that are in the hospital which is attached to the church. Some of these nuns are cloistered, but tend the sick ; they do not go without the gates, and if a visitor passes through the wards, they turn their faces from him.

What were once the cloisters are now devoted to secular uses; and the large gardens and grounds once trodden by the fair and noble nuns (for most of them belonged to the nobility), are now abandoned to the patients who are sufficiently well to walk through the avenues, and rest in the shadows of the tall trees.

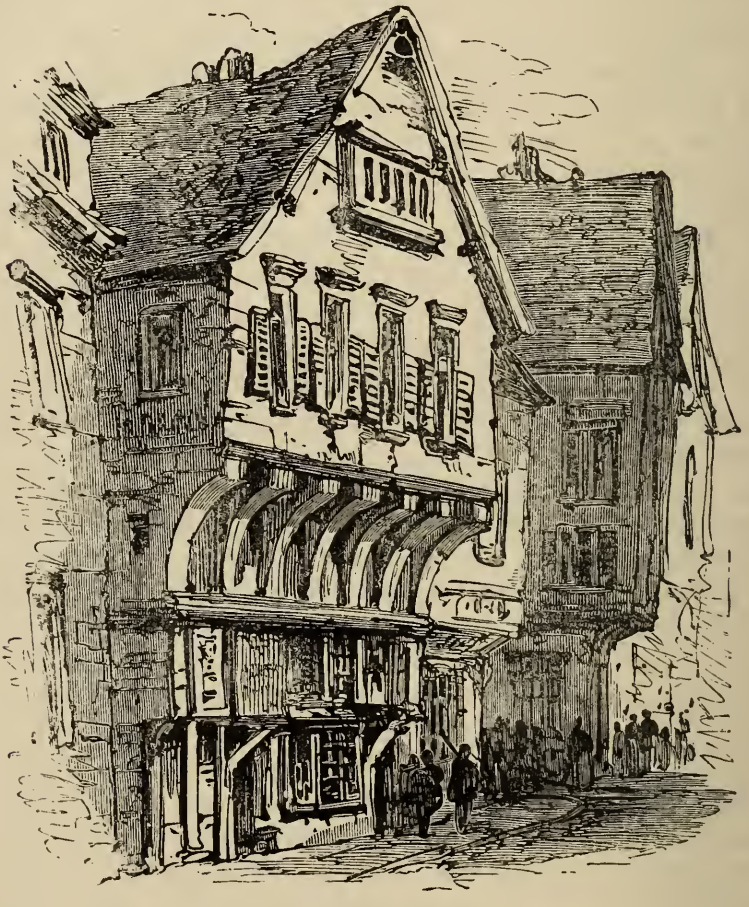
In the far-off days it was the custom for the Abbess of Caen on Trinity Sunday to give a dinner to all the inhabitants of the parish of Vaux-sur-Seulles, including the servants who had lived in their places a year and a day. The dinner was given in the interior of the abbey. All who assembled first washed their hands in an immense tub of water. They then sat down upon the ground and a large oil-cloth was spread before them. Each person received a loaf weighing twenty-two ounces, a piece of boiled bacon half a foot square ; then rashers of fried bacon ; then puddings made of bread and milk ; and as much cider or beer as they could drink.

The repast lasted four hours. But the inhabitants of the parish fell into such disrepute through excess of drinking that Charles VII. put an end to the dinner, and ordered that the money it cost should be paid yearly into the Church to defray the expenses of a Mass to be said on every Trinity Monday for the repose of the dead. At this mass six of the inhabitants who had previously attended the dinner were to be present.

We entered the abbey one evening when the shades of night were falling and vespers were about to be sung by the nuns. They passed silently into the choir, and though we could neither hear nor see

them, we could imagine them bending in their black veils in the attitude of prayer.

The choir was dimly lighted, but the nave was in greater gloom. We sat at the west end, and the whole building rose before us in solemn, silent majesty. The windows of the far east end, beyond the choir, scarcely reflected any light from the sky. Darkness, indeed, was rapidly gathering. The church was full of mysterious shadows, which seemed to change and flit about as if they were



OLD HOUSES, CAEN.

cast by restless ghosts. The beautiful aisles grew faint and dim, the blind arches above were lost in obscurity. All appealed—time, place and occasion—to one's sense of the religious and the divine. We could have sat on for hours wrapped in dreams which almost bordered upon the supernatural; almost made us feel in commune with the ancient mystics. Such an hour was worth a far longer journey, infinitely more time and trouble than this had cost us. We had the nave to ourselves, with the exception of a kneeling figure: a woman's figure in deep mourning, motionless as a statue, bending as a penitent, near the screen enclosing the choir.

Suddenly, as we sat lost in mystic reverie—wrapped in a dream

in which the soul seemed to have left the body and winged its flight to celestial regions—we were awakened by the voices of the nuns raised in the vesper hymn. Clear, beautiful and bright, they rose and fell in softest cadence. Their pure tones rang out and filled every crevice of the building, floated through vault and arch and aisle, now swelling loud, now dying out in gentlest whisper. An invisible, most lovely choir.

It was a moment never to be forgotten. We sat motionless as that drooping figure; lost in rapture; listening, as it seemed, to a choir of angels. The spell never once lifted; we never for a moment came back to earth. Then presently all was over. Quietly as the nuns had entered, they left the choir; flitting back noiselessly to their works of mercy. The lights were put out; the tomb of Matilda was left to its repose; the choir to darkness. We heard a distant door locked; all was ended.

We awoke to life and earth, but we sat on dreaming of what we had seen, allowing its influence to have full sway upon us. There are moments and sensations that only come now and then in a lifetime, and this was one of them. We would have prolonged the time, but the dreams will not stay at our bidding. They are so ethereal, so spiritual, that with the very effort to stay them they forsake us and vanish. It only wanted the quiet figure of that mourner to rise and flit down the aisle with noiseless tread and pass out of the church to arouse us to full consciousness.

We, too, rose and followed on her footsteps out into the night. It was quite dark, and under the stars that shone in the far-off sky we paced the solitary avenues of the gardens and thought upon what we had heard.

And we wondered if in those distant stars there were scenes fairer and more beautiful than these; choirs more angelic; whether they are nearer to the Heaven of Heavens; know more of the mysteries lying beyond the veil; see things less through a glass darkly; are subjected to the same temptations, the same joys and sorrows, the same hopes and fears, the same life tragedies, have the same knowledge of good and evil; and from the hour they were born begin, like ourselves, to draw near to the grave. Finally, whether they are the sheep of those "other folds" we have heard of, eventually to be gathered under one fold and One Shepherd.

These are questions to which there is no reply. In the mysteries of life by which we are surrounded we have but one present refuge and resource: IN YOUR PATIENCE POSSESS YE YOUR SOULS. One day the answer will come to each of us: but only at the moment of that "dread apocalypse."

A NIGHT WITH A RECLUSE IN THE FAYOUM.

IN January, 18—, I was hunting in the Fayoum, that district now, since Egypt has been opened up to Europeans, so well-known to sportsmen. One night while camping out, we were overtaken by a terrific storm, which having blown our tents to the ground, left us without any protection from its violence. There was nothing to do but to walk on, which we did in the direction of the Nile, in the hope of finding some shelter.

Suddenly I caught sight of a small hut; I approached and entered in at a small door, which was standing ajar. I looked round and saw a man seated on a rude bench in one of the corners of the room; his head was buried in his hands, and he seemed to be unaware of my entrance. Upon my making some slight noise, he looked up, and seeing me, rose without any apparent surprise, and made a gesture as if of welcome. In appearance he was the most remarkable man I have ever seen. Although seemingly not old, he was bent as if by intense study or meditation; his hair was iron grey, almost white, and worn away at the temples, showing his magnificent forehead full of power; his features were of the aquiline type and clearly cut, and must at one time have been wonderfully handsome; his eyes, which were deeply set, were of a steely grey hue and unnaturally brilliant, while his skin was absolutely without the slightest particle of colour.

He stood before me, this strange figure, waiting it seemed for me to speak, but when I made some apology for disturbing him, he stopped me with a quiet, old-world courtesy, and said in a deep musical voice:

"My friend, I am a recluse, having and requiring but few comforts, as you see, but such as this hut is, use it and be welcome."

I thanked him and sat down upon a bench in the corner, feeling nevertheless somewhat awkward and uncomfortable. All my efforts to draw him into conversation were futile, although he replied to my questions courteously and kindly. At length I remarked: "Do you never feel lonely here?"

"No," he replied, "for I am not alone."

To my question as to who were his companions, he vouchsafed no answer, and there ensued a long silence, broken only by the patter of the rain-drops upon the roof. Suddenly he said:

"I will tell you the story of my life. No human being has ever before heard it; soon it will be too late, for I have not many hours to live.

"My earlier history," he began, "is unimportant, and not worth repeating. Suffice it to say, however, that when I came of age I

entered into the possession of a comfortable fortune, far more than sufficient for my wants, which were always simple. Worldly ambition I never had; my only desire was to travel. The East inflamed my imagination with its time-defying pyramids and the wrecks of its giant temples, carrying one far back over forty centuries to a time when the blood of human sacrifices flowed upon the altars of Isis and Juno near the banks of the Nile.

"For nearly ten years I lived in the East, travelling first over Syria, Arabia and Egypt, afterwards over India, Siam and Thibet. Then I came back to Egypt, and, wearied with a constant recurrence of adventures and episodes of excitement and danger, sought a period of calm and rest upon a darobeeah on the Nile. I sailed up to Assouan, where I met her who afterwards became my darling wife."

Here he paused a moment as if in deep emotion; then continued:

"I need not describe her; let it be enough to say she possessed all the attributes of an angel—a gentle, loving disposition and a wonderful, almost spiritual, beauty. She was wintering in Egypt on account of her health, for she suffered from an affection of the lungs, and was very delicate. Ah! I believe we loved one another as no two persons have ever loved before; our happiness must have made the angels jealous. We were married, and I took her on the darobeeah down the Nile.

"Six months passed of almost perfect happiness, whose only alloy was the knowledge of her dread disease, which, in spite of the warm, lovely climate, made rapid strides. At Siout we knew she was inevitably doomed, but, although fast growing weaker, she wished to continue our journey.

"Hitherto we had travelled but slowly, stopping often two or three weeks at one place, and exploring together the ruins of the great temples and the wrecks of ancient monuments which strew the banks of the Nile; but now that she was rapidly succumbing, we hurried on with all speed, in order to reach Cairo, if possible, before her death. Fate, however, decreed it otherwise; and this hut is built opposite the spot where she died."

Again he paused, and again after a moment's silence went on:

"I have recalled the scene of her last hours many times, so why not once again for the last time? I feel no sadness, no bitterness now; her death only brought us more closely together, and soon we shall be together for ever. We moored the darobeeah to the bank, for we knew that she could not outlive the night. It was a glorious evening: in the west the sun was just sinking behind the hills; its departing rays flooded the desert with light, giving it the appearance of a vast sea of gold; while in the north loomed up the great pyramids of Sahâra, their outlines clearly limned against the deep sapphire sky. Scattered about the deck of our darobeeah lay our Arab crew and servants, silently smoking and seemingly unmoved

by the shadow of death. Then I could have killed them in my fury at their indifference; now I recognise their wisdom, which teaches them to bow before the will of Allah, and not to seek to turn aside the immutable decrees of Kismet.

"We took her on deck and placed her upon soft cushions; the breeze played with her golden hair and the beams of the dying sun lighted up her pale, attenuated face, which already in my imagination seemed to be radiant with a foretaste of heaven. The moon rose and the stars crept out one by one. It was a saintly night; and in this pathetic blending of twilight, moonlight and dreamlight, we sat together, hand-in-hand, listening to the rustling of the palm trees, the only sound that broke the profound, solemn stillness of the night. I watched her face; she seemed as if taking a last farewell of earth; her ardent nature gave her an innate conception of the plenitude of life, and perhaps it seemed hard for her in the fulness of her youth and beauty to die amidst such a scene of peaceful beauty and halcyon repose.

"At last the end came; I felt a slight pressure of her hand; it grew cold; her loving eyes became dim, and murmuring: 'Kiss me, darling—the last time—do not grieve—I will be your guardian angel,' she died.

"For many months I was almost wild with grief. I travelled in the most dangerous parts of Central Africa, parts hitherto untrodden by Europeans. Death, however, seemed to shun me; I courted but found it not. I passed scatheless through the midst of wild tribes, untouched by storms of arrows; I slept in vast virgin forests beneath trees whose very shadow is reckoned to be death; I spent weeks journeying over immense deserts, the haunts of innumerable lions and beasts of prey; I seemed to bear a charmed life. Three years ago I came here and built this hut, exactly opposite the spot where we moored the darobeeah on that fatal night.

"Two miles away to the east is the Nile, around me are scattered the wrecks of cities and temples, while the sandstone of the surrounding desert is honeycombed with tombs. There is no life here except that of the desert. Sometimes a few wandering Bedouins encamp here, but for weeks and weeks I never see a human being: I am alone amidst the burial of centuries. But now I have regained all my calmness—I might almost say, all my happiness; for during these three years I have mortified my flesh, I have stamped out from my being all human passions, all earthly desires: the world and life are to me nothing. I live only in the spirit and in dreams. I have attained nirvâna. The strength of my body has long since been exhausted by meditations and fastings; but instead I have an immense, an almost unbounded power of intelligence and will, which enables me to cast away my flesh as a garment, and to dwell in the spirit as if beyond the grave.

"And my wife has kept her promise. At first when I came to this place I seemed to experience a sensation of familiarity in the

surroundings, as though something akin to my soul were near and about me—something strange, ineffable, indescribable. At nights I had beautiful vivid dreams, representing to me incidents of my life and places I had visited. Thus, in dreams, seeing faces and things long since forgotten, I re-lived my life, perfected and idealised, and without the bitterness of earth.

"At length I saw my wife; and since then, during one year, we have lived together in the spirit in a mystic, beautiful union. It was night: there was a brilliant moon, and through the open casement the silver beams fell upon the foot of my couch; no sound broke the universal stillness. All was utter silence and perfect peace. I lay upon my couch in a dreamy reverie, when suddenly a delicious feeling of heavenly repose, an ineffable sensation of happiness, stole over me. By my side I saw my wife. No words could describe the glory of her spiritual loveliness, the divine serenity of her loving smile, the beauty of her clinging garments, woven as it were from zephyrs or from pulses of the air: such was their transparency, such was their gossamer lightness.

"She bent down and breathed lightly on my forehead. Instantly it seemed as though some powerful magnetic force had entered my being and was coursing through my veins, purifying my blood from all taint of earth and of flesh, while my soul seemed to quicken and expand until, with a mighty throb, it burst from my body. And then side by side and with hands joined we mounted upwards into the starry heights. Above us were the dense violet skies strewn with stars, beneath rolled the patriarchal Nile, winding among the ruins of temples and pyramids and the wrecks of half-buried cities.

"Since then she has often come for me, and together we float through the infinity of space. Oh the delight, the glory of all this, defies expression. Distance is annihilated: in the twinkling of an eye we can traverse the world from pole to pole, comprehending with our boundless power of intelligence the vast deserts, the pathless forests, the mighty oceans and the virgin mountains covered with untrodden snow over which we pass. We do not speak, but our thoughts are communicated from one to the other by a sort of mental telegraphy: thus we have, so to say, one mind in which all things are in common. From the earth there rises continuously a soft, low sound like a prolonged sigh, mournful and utterly sad, while the heavens resound with a glorious chant, which is borne to our ears, subdued but full of triumph.

"The air is peopled with spirits: as we cleave through space we meet other spirits joined together in this beautiful union of soul, ineffably happy. It is not given to many to penetrate the secrets beyond the grave; only those who, like myself, have so crucified the flesh that all the base instincts which fetter the soul to earth are utterly eradicated can hope to enjoy these spiritual delights. But still, although the living know it not, the dead are continually with

them, soothing often their cares and troubles, saving them often from danger by the warnings of what is called instinct. Thus the dead watch over the living whom they love, compelled by some natural law to guard their lives, but awaiting them with hope.

"Such is the story of my life, not altogether, I think, without its moral. My hours are now numbered—to-morrow my soul will have risen from dust for ever to the fulness of perfect knowledge. My wife will come for me to-night. I feel it and rejoice. Farewell."

My host lay down upon his rough couch, and soon his regular but almost imperceptible breathing told me that he slept. As for me, his deep, solemn voice seemed to sound in my ear and thrill me with a feeling of awe, and I lay awake on my rug for a long time pondering over the strange story of this wild visionary.

It must have been near midnight before I fell into an unquiet slumber, troubled with a succession of fantastic dreams, and it came as a great relief when the rising sun awakened me with a flood of light. I rose at once and looked at my host. He lay on the bed cold and rigid—dead—his arms were stretched out, as if with a gesture of greeting, and upon his calm face was a smile of almost angelic happiness. He must have died about midnight.

Needless to say that I took upon myself to perform the last sacred duty.

C. E. S.

THE ACORN AND THE MUSHROOM.

From the French of Lachambeaudie.

An acorn bruised a mushroom's head,
Who, thus rebuking, mildly said:
"I pray you, friend, come not so near;
There's ample room for us two here."
With scorn, the acorn made reply:
"Do you suppose that such as I,
Of ancient, noblest lineage born,
Should heed a thing sprung up since morn?"
The mushroom answered in this wise:
"A parvenu you may despise,
Yet bear in mind that 'tis my fate
To deck the tables of the great;
Whilst vilest is the lot for you—
Into the pigstye straight you go."

More than one high-born fool we find,
And oft base-born of noble mind.

M. Betham-Edwards.

A LILY, AZURE.

I WAS sent by my doctors, after a winter in the south of France, to spend the spring months at Felice on the Lago Maggiore. I was tired of exile, and wanted to be home for the Easter boat race, and it was some days before the beauty of the broad lake and of the sunset over snowy St. Gothard and the blossoming trees forced a kind of contentment upon me.

Sometimes, however, clouds and mists hung over the grey lake, and rain fell with a good will, and then unhappy was the invalid spelling out German newspapers in a damp salon; more unhappy still the youthful bride and bridegroom, already finding their own ideas and conversation begin to flag, yet avoiding and avoided by all fellow-prisoners by mutual consent.

But, happily, rain never lasted very long, and in the sunshine it was pleasant to explore the old town and its neighbourhood.

One Sunday, straying into the village church, I found the children being catechised by the old parish priest, an upright, white-haired man of striking appearance. I lingered to speak to him after the children had gone, and asked him if he would help me to find a teacher, or at least a native whose accent was tolerably pure, and who would talk Italian with me for a little time every day, to accustom my ear to the sound, for mine was little more than book knowledge of the language. The old man listened patiently to my imperfect sentences, talked to me a little, and finding I had no difficulty in understanding his clear, measured accents, he volunteered presently himself to give me a lesson every day. He had little to do; it would be an amusement to him and a pleasure. I wished to offer some equivalent in money, but he put the idea aside very decidedly, and we arranged that I should come and have my first lesson next morning.

So deserted was the part of the village where the old priest lived that it was with some difficulty I found his house—a small, shabby dwelling near the church. A low passage led to a little inner yard, inhabited by poultry. Round this and under the eaves ran a slight wooden balcony, made picturesque by a vine which grew over it, trailing and untrained. From the balcony opened a sitting-room, very slightly and poorly furnished.

In this house my old friend lived, year out, year in, together with his two old grey-haired brothers, one a priest, one a composer; an ancient sister who kept house for them, and four cats. He had lived here, at Felice, all his life; had never had the opportunity of travelling even so far as Rome, to visit which was the desire of his heart. He had seen, but not rejoiced in, the accomplishment of the unity of

Italy; since then the people had grown independent and did not show the old respect to their priests.

He was very poor—had just enough for his wants, but not enough to satisfy those of the beggars who came constantly to his door. The members of the little household lived very simply—no superfluity of food or of raiment—except, perhaps, in the matter of pocket handkerchiefs, a great display of which might be seen drying on the balcony at the time of the weekly wash. Snuff was the one luxury they allowed themselves.

Most of his life had been monotonous and uneventful. Once he had heard there was a strange lady of distinction in the church, and going there he saw a figure draped in black kneeling before the altar in deep devotion. She spoke to him, when she rose, kind and gracious words, but he could not answer, so overcome he was with reverence and sorrow, for it was the ex-Empress Eugenie after her great loss.

That had been one of the chief events of his life.

Another was, the death of an English nobleman, to whose sick bed he had been called to administer the last sacraments, and who had offered him before he left the room a pile of gold, but he had been obliged to refuse it. Only the Church might receive it; not he, for his personal use; but I think those proffered gold pieces became the groundwork of many dream visions of better living and travel, and larger means of helping the poor, with Rome as the goal of all.

The other grey-haired priest, his brother, looked starved and thin. I saw him but seldom, but the poor old composer often came in and played for me, trying to beat out melodies on the antiquated piano. Many of its notes were fixed and dumb; some of his fingers were useless and stiffened with rheumatism. It fretted him that he could not better express the music he felt within him.

The Padre was very proud of his little church, and showed me its most precious contents. A stone taken from some old Roman temple, with carved figures of dancing nymphs and of a heathen altar—a little blackened picture of the Madonna, visited by sick and diseased pilgrims from afar, because it was said that sometimes its lips had been seen to move as if invoking blessing on a suppliant, and that always in such cases healing had followed; and another Madonna, with sweet eyes and auburn hair and a gracious face, signed with the name of Bernardinis Luini, and visited by tourists, and curtained away from the sight of the everyday congregation in order that an occasional lire might be gained by its unveiling.

Almost close under this picture I noticed that a slab of white marble had been let into the dark stone floor. The words "A rivederci"—till we meet again—were carved on it, with the letter "L" surrounded by a small wreath of flowers in low relief.

"That is the grave of a stranger," the old priest said, seeing me stop to look at it. "He was found kneeling dead before this picture one Easter morning; no one knew whence he had come. He was

doubtless a foreigner—English or Tedesco—for his hair was fair. His face was most beautiful."

"And how did he come to be buried here?" I asked.

"Ah," the Padre answered, with some reserve I fancied. "Two days after his death an order came from the bishop of the diocese that he was to be buried here in this spot, and afterwards the slab was placed over him. But come, the children are waiting for the catechising."

"But did no friends come to tell his name or visit the grave?" I said, still lingering by the white slab.

"Every Easter Day since he died, eighteen years ago, a blue wreath is laid there; that is all we know," was the answer.

And then the old priest began to talk to some of the little children coming into the church, and question them, his own remarks and explanations becoming longer and more earnest, until at last, instead of walking up and down the aisle, he remained standing near the altar, and with growing eloquence expounded the clause in the creed which formed that day's lesson: "I believe in the Communion of Saints," and spoke of the mutual help and sympathy between the three Churches—the church "militante," the church "purgante," and the church "trionfante" in heaven. I think the good old man had some hope of weaning me from heretical ideas, and leading me into the true fold by his eloquent earnestness.

The days were monotonous but passed quickly enough at Felice. I was gaining health and strength; was able to take long morning walks as well as boating expeditions in the afternoon—a lazy kind of boating when I lay in the stern and was pulled along by a bright, handsome boy, Luigi, of about seventeen, who would chatter away by the hour, to the great benefit of my Italian—about the poverty of the country and the quarrels amongst the ill-paid soldiers, and the glories of the annual festa held under the arcade, and the pride of all the village in its Campanile, the most beautiful on all the lake.

"The Intra people, who are so rich, subscribed, and were determined to have a more beautiful one than ours, and they built it four feet higher; and soon afterwards one of the great summer storms came and blew down all the new part; and since then they had not been so proud, and had said nothing about rebuilding it. And no other village had a picture like ours that had worked miracles, or a beautiful Madonna with eyes like those of the rich English lady who came every year to the grand villa she had built at Stresa. She came there always in the spring—sometimes her husband and his friends with her; and then they filled the house with company and had a festa every day."

I had heard of the "English lord," Sir Robert Ley, and his beautiful villa. Indeed, I had been given a letter of introduction to him by Blake, my college friend, who sometimes came to stay with him, but not feeling strong enough for society, I had not delivered it.

Easter Sunday came round, my last Sunday at Felice, for "after Easter" the doctors had said I might begin moving homewards, and I intended to take them at their word.

It was a beautiful sunny day, and the bells of distant villages could be heard from over the water as I strolled through the village to take my last look at the old church. It was filled with the people of the village and the country round, in their holiday dress. Some stayed and joined in the service going on; others—the men chiefly—came in for a few moments only, knelt down, crossed themselves, said a silent prayer, and went away noiselessly. Little children clinging to their mother's hand looked round with wondering eyes at the red cloth on the pillars, the gay flowers on the altar, and the unveiled Madonna.

The old priest stood at the altar. In his sacerdotal robe, and with the incense smoke about him, he seemed no longer the gentle, kind old man, the servant of all, but rather the mediator, the advocate of the wandering multitude, bearing the knowledge of their sins in his prayer, and the knowledge of pardon in his benediction.

I stayed till the service was at an end, and then stood aside while the crowd passed out. Two or three young girls remained behind in the corner near the Luini Madonna, and I saw they were pointing at some object lying on the white marble slab.

"Casa c'è?" I asked one who was leaving the church, and stopped to dip her finger reverently in the stone basin of holy water.

"The blue wreath," she whispered, as she sprinkled the sacred drops on her breast and forehead, and passed out.

I drew near the stranger's grave, and saw that the blue wreath of which I had heard from the Padre was indeed there—forget-me-not and starry gentian from the high Alps the flowers of which it was composed.

"Who placed it there?" I asked.

"Ah, no one can tell that," a little girl answered. "Always on Easter day it is found there; always a beautiful blue wreath; but no one is ever seen bringing it, and often the flowers are such as do not grow in our country. Graziella, the baker's widow, declared one Easter Eve she would watch and see who brought it, but at daybreak she came home stiff with cold and terrified, because she said while she was waiting white wings had suddenly brushed past her; and she was in bed for a month with rheumatism; and the Padre said it was a right punishment for her vain curiosity, and that we would do better to tend the graves of our own dead than to spy on others who remembered their duty more faithfully than ourselves—for Graziella had never said a mass for her husband, or put a wreath on his grave. So now no one likes to ask any questions about it, but I think myself that whoever lies in this spot was a saint; and that the wreath is laid here by an angel who saw him die."

I stayed a little time there, musing. For eighteen years, the

priest had said, the grave had never been neglected; that seemed a long devotion in this hurried, forgetful world.

Next day I said good-bye to the little household where I had always been welcomed. I found the poor old faces brighter and more animated than usual. A great event had happened—a famous musician had come from Milan to play the organ at Baveno on a feast day; and the mass he had chosen was one written long before by my poor old withered friend, who had sometimes tried to play a few bars of it to me, and the famous musician had sent across the lake to Felice to tell him this, and to ask for his presence at the church. He had never heard his mass performed before, and his eyes brightened and his poor old hands trembled as he spoke of it.

I left, I think, on that very day, and never heard how the old man bore the fulfilment of his longing desire, or whether the music of that Easter time was the last he heard on earth.

II.

Two years later I was again at Felice.

Business had called me to North Italy, and before returning home I resolved to spend a little time amongst the beautiful lakes. I passed some days exploring the unexpected windings of Como; one or two at little bright Lugano; and at Stresa, on Maggiore, I lingered for a few more, chiefly kept there by the neighbourhood of my friend Blake, who was staying at the great show villa belonging to the "English lord" I used to hear of at Felice—Sir Robert Ley.

The villa was full of guests. Blake told me of them and their doings, and I saw them sometimes driving in canopied phaetons along the shores of the lake, or skimming over its surface in gaily-decked pleasure-boats. It was very inconvenient to Sir Robert having to come abroad just then, Blake told me; but his wife had been ailing and needed change; and she could never be persuaded to leave her home in the fens except for these spring months, which she liked to spend on Maggiore.

I gathered that she took little part in the festivities of the villa. She spent most of her time in her garden, or on the lake with an old boatman devoted to her service; or sometimes she would visit the little chapel at Stresa, and though not a Catholic would stay there for hours. She could seldom be persuaded to join in any excursions; had withstood all solicitation to spend a day at Felice a little time ago, though it was her birthday and they had all begged her to come. Her guests seemed to look on her with respect and some little awe.

I spent an evening at the villa, but she was not well and did not appear; but a day or two after I met her as I was walking along the brink of the lake. She was looking across the water to the setting sun; her hands clasped, and, as it seemed to me, her eyes full of

tears. She had the remains of great beauty, a graceful figure and large dark eyes, though her hair was quite white, contrasting with them. She bowed slightly on seeing me, and walked slowly back towards the villa gardens, entering by a low side door, half hidden with Banksia roses.

A day or two later I went back to my old quarters at Felice. My first visit was to the house of my good friend the priest, but, to my sorrow, it was deserted. The old man had died some months earlier; both his brothers in the previous year. The poor old sister had alone survived, and had with her little possessions gone to live with some relative in another village; for the tumble-down old house was no longer safe to live in.

The new Padre had established himself in a more substantial one, having some private means of support. I made his acquaintance soon: a hard-looking, taciturn man, a great contrast to his gentle, genial predecessor.

The complete disappearance of the little household I had felt so much interested in lessened the attraction Felice had had for me, and I resolved to go on to Turin early in the next week, when the Easter fêtes would be over.

I found some of my old acquaintances, however, living and working as they used to do; amongst them Luigi, my favourite boatman, talkative as of old. The times did not seem to have mended, by his account. The taxes were still heavy. There was very little money in the country. The soldiers were as ill-fed and discontented as ever. The new Padre was not popular, I found; though better off than his predecessor, he was not as ready to share his superfluity with those in need; he was harsh also in his manner, and had changed some of the old customs: only opened the church at certain hours, instead of leaving it unlocked day and night, as of old, and had the morning service at an hour when all the working-men were already in the field and could not attend. No rich stranger came and built a beautiful villa at Felice as the English lord had done at Stresa. Ah! he was so rich! spent more in the couple of months he stayed there than all the tourists who came to the great hotel at Felice. And the signora: she gave away hundreds of lire every year; even sending a present to Felice every Easter for the poor and the sick; always good and kind to the poorest beggar and wanderer, though she looked so proud and grand.

So chattered Luigi on Easter Eve, as he rowed me slowly over the great lake, till we could see the golden gate of the St. Gothard Pass, veiled in the changing sunset hues. Luigi, however, thought less of the purple and gold than of the background of dark clouds to which he pointed.

"That means a storm," he said. "We shall have bad weather before morning."

The air was hot and oppressive, and after dinner at the table d'hôte,

not feeling attracted by any of the guests, I strolled down the garden to the border of the lake, and presently going through the village I went up the broad steps of the old church, which I had not yet visited.

It was silent and deserted. Black cloth, left there since the Good Friday service, hung heavily from the pillars and covered the altar. My thoughts went back to the catechising I had so often heard there, to the eager children's faces, the good old priest's serene kindness; the heartfelt eloquence of his discourses; his pride in his church and its contents; the story of the stranger who had died there under the picture of the Madonna, and of the white slab which had been placed over his grave.

I had unconsciously taken a seat close to it, and suddenly noticing it bare and cold in the moonlight, I remembered the wreath which used to be laid on it by unseen hands, and wondered if on the morrow it would as usual be found there, or it the silent tenant of the tomb was at last forgotten. The heat of the evening and my idle thoughts and the stillness of the place so affected me that at last sleep stole upon me unawares.

It must have been after midnight, and it was quite dark, when with a sudden start I awoke.

All was changed from the stillness of the evening. The wind howled round the church and rattled the window frames. Hailstones beat against the leaded panes, and now and then I could hear the distant growl of thunder. I groped my way to the door, thinking that I might gain the more genial shelter of some house in the village, but I could not open it; it was locked outside.

I remembered the little door in the corner near the white slab, and painfully felt my way to it, but its fastenings also resisted my efforts. The recollection of what Luigi had said about the new Padre and his regulations flashed upon me, and I guessed that the doors must have been locked for the night while I was asleep.

It was a dreary prospect: that of a long night in the old church. I lay down again on the bench where I had fallen asleep, but sleep was not to be won a second time. The storm grew more furious, the thunder louder and more frequent, flashes of lightning lit up the black-palled pillars and the weird monuments. I shut my eyes and drew my hat over them.

Suddenly it seemed to me as if above the noise of wind and hail there rose the cry of a human voice outside the door near which I sat, and I could hear that someone tried in vain to undo its fastenings. I went nearer the door and listened, thinking it might be some friend come to help me, but it was a despairing voice I heard.

"Lawrence! Lawrence!" it cried, "let me in; why should I be shut out? For twenty years have I not come and brought you the only gift you can take from me now? What sin have I been guilty of that I must be punished like this? Have I not repented long

enough of my pride that sent you away? And it is only once in the year I can come and ask you to forgive me, and why must the door be shut against me at last?"

A gust of wind seemed to whirl away the words and turn them into a shriek of despair. Presently the voice was raised again, pleading and suppliant.

"Ah, Lawrence, it will break my heart if I am kept outside. Is it not my only happiness to come and kneel beside you for a little time? Ah, let me in."

I could hear the door rattled and shaken, but I knew it was in vain, no ordinary force could open it. A sob of despair mingled with the rising wind.

Then suddenly a great peal of thunder was heard. Flash after flash of lightning illumined the church. The wind rose and shrieked, and in a moment—whether from the fury of the storm, or by some electric force or the strength of some human effort—the window-frame above me was dashed in and crashed upon the floor, and hail and rain were beating on my head.

Bewildered, I sought shelter near the altar. Crash after crash of thunder warned me that the storm had not yet spent itself. Then I could hear the rain coming down in torrents. The wind grew quieter by degrees, and at last all was still; and the first ray of sunrise shone in through the east window—shone upon the white marble slab, where, amongst the fragments of shattered lead and glass and half-melted hailstones, lay a wreath of lilies—not white, but blue—blue as a glimpse of the sky between a rift in the clouds above.

I recognised in a moment the wonderful blue lilies of Zanzibar (*Nymphæa Zanzibarensis*); but was almost too cold and weary and bewildered and benumbed to wonder how they had come there through the storm and the barred doors. I saw that the broken window opened a way of escape to me, and quickly availed myself of it, clambering up to it with the help of one of the benches. I found my way back to the hotel through the deserted street, and in my comfortable bed almost forgot the fears and trouble of the night, and awoke at mid-day rather doubtful as to what had been a dream and what reality.

Strolling out in the afternoon, I was surprised to see Blake in the hotel garden.

"What has brought you here?" I asked. "Are you tired of your villa and its luxuries?"

He looked grave as he answered:

"Oh, there has been a melancholy wind-up to our party there! Lady Ley has been taken dangerously ill, and we have all had to leave. It was very sudden; for last night she seemed all right when she said good-night to us after dinner as usual; but this morning we were told by Sir Robert that she was very ill indeed. He said no more: gave no particulars; but there is an idea that the

poor thing must have been sleep-walking. They say she was found senseless on the shore near the lake; her hands all cut and bleeding. The old boatman, who was the first to find her, was trying to carry her up to the house, when one of the maids who was going to early mass saw her and gave the alarm."

Blake seemed troubled and anxious, and was expecting a messenger from Stresa with the latest news. At nightfall it came: Lady Ley had never recovered consciousness, and had died at sunset.

Two days later Blake asked me to go with him to Stresa. There was to be a funeral service at the little chapel in the grounds of the Villa Ley, before the poor lady's body was taken back to England, and he wished to attend.

We found a large gathering there, some of the late guests at the villa, some English acquaintances of the neighbourhood, and many of the poor villagers from round about who had benefited by the open-handed generosity of the dead woman, whose loss would be felt the more that her husband had already resolved to shut up the villa, sell it or let it, but never come to it again.

There were many tears shed during the short, impressive service. When it was over and the people had dispersed, Blake and I still lingered, waiting for the evening boat to take us back to Felice.

An old man, the gardener, who had been waiting near, came to the chapel door, a small basket covered with leaves in his hand. He recognised Blake, and stopped to speak to him.

"Ah, the signora, the poor lady!" he said, passing his hand across his eyes. "When shall we see her like? May God bless her always; may God give her peace. She was most good; most noble; most gracious; the most gentle lady in all the world; ah, how the flowers will droop now she is gone! she loved them so much, she used to come out every morning to tend them, and would speak to me about them as if they were her friends. She always loved the blue ones best; she told me once it was for the sake of a friend who had loved them too, and who had died. Her blue lilies, poor soul, I thought she was laughing at me when she spoke of them, but she had skilled men from Milan to make a house and a pond for them, and they were planted in the water, and she taught me to tend them, and at last this year they bloomed—a wonderful sight at sunrise! the little pond was covered with them. But on the day of her death they were stolen; some evil-disposed one must have made his way in and taken them, for it was not until mid-day I thought of going to look at them; I was watching at the door all the morning for news of my lady, and when I went back to the pond they were all gone—only one little bud left. And now it has opened, and I brought it to send with her to her cold grave in England."

He opened the little basket and took the flower out reverently. It was a blue Zanzibar lily.

BECALMED.

I.

The merchant with an anxious face
Went slowly through the market place;
They called, above the hucksters' din,
"Good master, be your ships come in?"
But still, "We look for them," he said,
And every neighbour wagged his head.
Quoth the grey monk against the wall,
"What gain in wealth, if this be all?"

II.

The men-at-arms, so proud and fair,
Were mustered in the city square;
Ah, youth is fair and manhood proud—
"And yet," so spake the tattling crowd,
"These make not half so brave a show
As those that fell a year ago!"
Quoth the grey monk against the wall,
"Where's glory's gain, if this be all?"

III.

The lovers went by twos and twos,
In garden paths between the yews;
Where boughs scarce let the sunbeams slip—
Close arm to arm, quick lip to lip.
"When courting's over, summer's fled,
The girls may weep!" the gossips said.
Quoth the grey monk against the wall,
"What gain in love, if this be all?"

IV.

A savoury scent of roasting hare
Came steaming out upon the air;
"What gain in love, or wealth, or pride?
Better be calm, and stand aside;
Give the wild world its restless way,
And in seclusion watch and pray!"
Quoth the grey monk against the wall,
"Truly religion's worth them all!"

G. B. Stuart.

Whispering Woods.

THE

SUMMER NUMBER

OF

THE ARGOSY.

THE SPHINX-HEAD SCARF-PIN.

BY JOYCE DARRELL, AUTHOR OF "WINIFRED POWER."

I.

SOME five years ago in a crowded Bayswater omnibus, on a sultry afternoon in the height of the London season, a young girl sat dreamily watching the varied incidents of the street.

She was young and pretty, neatly but rather poorly dressed, and unmistakably a lady. Her face was pale and sad, yet brave, and there was something very interesting and touching in the contrast between the steadfast expression of her large grey eyes, and the wistful lines of her mouth. Obviously, she was sensitive yet courageous, gentle yet strong. Hardship had attuned her mind to sympathy, and the things she most noticed among the sights before her were those which told of struggle and suffering.

The omnibus was now rolling along the thoroughfare which runs between the park on one side, and rows upon rows of handsome houses on the other. Presently it stopped to take up a passenger, and at the same moment the girl's attention was attracted to a gentleman—a young man—who had mounted the steps to the portico of one of these houses, and was ringing the bell. He was a well-built, well-dressed young fellow, yet even from that distance there was something in the lines of his figure which told of anxiety.

The girl watched him curiously; apparently she knew him, for a faint colour had come into her cheeks, and a light into her eyes. The door was opened by a footman. Evidently the answer to the visitor was "Not at home," for the young man drew out his card-case, and with fingers that trembled—the girl was positive that they trembled—he extracted a card, handed it in, and then descending the steps, hurried down the street, not with the elastic tread of happiness, but with the swift step of mortification and disappointment, seeking to fly from prying eyes.

Tears started into the girl's eyes, and involuntarily she murmured

half aloud, "Poor fellow!" thus attracting the attention of an elderly, fresh-faced gentleman, who was seated beside her and had been absorbed in a newspaper.

"Why, Miss Ruth, is it you?" he exclaimed, lifting his hat, and looking quite pleased to see her. "To think of my being beside you all this time and never finding it out. Is Mrs. Ayrton well?"

"She is better, but she has been very ill," said Ruth, with a gentle smile.

"Ah! sorry to hear that. And you've been overdoing it, I suppose—running about as usual all day, and nursing your mother at nights?"

"Indeed, the nursing had to be done both night and day at one time, and then I could not go out at all," replied Ruth.

"But you are free again now? I am glad of that, for I was intending to look in on you this evening, and tell you to call to-morrow on Miss Fetherstonhaugh."

Here the old gentleman nodded sagely, and Ruth gave an answering smile, knowing that Miss Fetherstonhaugh was to be a new pupil for wood-carving. "You are always so kind, Mr. Creighton."

"Not at all—not at all—should like to be kinder, but you're a naughty, proud girl. Well, Miss Fetherstonhaugh is very nice; heiress, beauty, all that sort of thing—lives in one of those houses we have just passed—15, Balmoral Terrace."

This was the name of the row of houses from one of which Ruth had just seen the young man turned away. Of course it was Miss Fetherstonhaugh he had wished to see: she remembered all about it now, and her compassion deepened.

The omnibus stopped at a sign from Mr. Creighton, and he and Ruth descended. "I will walk with you to your own door," said the old gentleman. "Take my arm, and try to look like my daughter. I should be glad to have a nice little daughter like you, but I should have brought her up not to be so proud."

Ruth laughed.

"Not a bit of it, Mr. Creighton. It is always the people who are kindest to others that are most independent for themselves. I am sure if you lost all your money to-morrow, you would sweep the streets rather than be indebted for a penny to anyone."

"So I might—so I might; but I am a man, and if I lost my money it would be my own fault, and I should have to expiate it. But you are suffering for the fault——" He checked himself abruptly, for a grieved look had come into Ruth's eyes, and he knew how much some allusions distressed her.

She smiled at him kindly, however, on noting his embarrassment, and said gaily: "You are in a very scolding mood to-day, and deserve to be punished: so I shall talk to you about something disagreeable. Do you know that poor Mr. Borlase is still without occupation?"

Mr. Creighton's genial expression changed to one of stony gravity at once.

"My dear young lady, Arthur Borlase's misfortunes do not affect me. He deserves them."

"But that is not fully proved," said Ruth.

"In my eyes it is. When the guilt lay only between Borlase and Standen, no one who knew the two men as I knew them could doubt for an instant to which of them it should be attributed."

Ruth, looking straight before her, set her pretty lips, and shook her head—a gesture which meant that she did not share Mr. Creighton's opinion. But all she said was: "Whatever the real truth may be, do you not think poor Mr. Borlase should be afforded a chance of recovering himself?"

"Miss Ruth, London is overcrowded with applicants for occupation: most of them hardworking, upright, well-educated young men—why should one of these be deprived of bread in order that a sentimental consideration might be shown to a forger?"

"Only because you and I know the so-called 'forger,' while we do not know the other applicants, and the little world of our acquaintances is the sphere in which we can do most good," said Ruth, boldly.

It was Mr. Creighton's turn to shake his head. "That's very pretty, but it isn't practical. You may have Arthur Borlase in to tea as often as you choose (although, mind, I think it is foolish), but I want honest people among my clerks, and I am not going to take him back in my office." They had reached Ruth's door by this time, and Mr. Creighton held out his hand in farewell.

"You won't come in to see mamma?"

"Not to-day. Remember Miss Fetherstonhaugh to-morrow at three. Take care of yourself, my dear. Don't overtask your strength, and don't waste your sympathy." And lifting his hat with a friendly nod, the old gentleman disappeared down the street which led to his own substantial dwelling-house.

Beatrice Villas, where Ruth Ayrton lived, was a row of small houses, each with a garden just big enough for one rose-bush and a microscopic square of grass in front of the area railings.

Three steps led up to a portico, which tried its best to be imposing, and every house had a bow-window to the front parlour.

From the furnishing of that bow-window you could make a tolerable guess at the respective natures of the inhabitants of the row. One window exhibited a small round table, covered with a red and white crochet cover, and surmounted with a stand of wax-flowers under glass.

Another showed a weedy-looking geranium in a pot swathed in a yellow Liberty handkerchief. A third was animated with birds and bright with carefully tended flowers, and that was Ruth Ayrton's.

As she was letting herself in with a latch-key, she turned and scanned

cagerly the windows of a house opposite. Presently a nice if rather severe-looking old lady in a black lace cap appeared and nodded at her, and Ruth, in returning the salute, blushed and smiled with some happy thought. A moment later, she softly turned the handle of her own sitting-room door and entered with the hushed tread of one trained in sick nursing.

But a delicate, fragile-looking woman, who was stretched upon a sofa near the window, raised her head as Ruth approached, and said languidly: "I am not asleep. You are later than usual. Have you any news?"

"I have a new pupil—Miss Fetherstonhaugh," replied Ruth, sitting down near the sofa, and taking her mother's hand gently.

"Then that makes two," replied the elder lady. "Mrs. William—or Mrs. Ayrton as I must call her" (this was said with a touch of bitterness)—"was here this afternoon, and she wants you to give a lesson at—— I forget the name of the street; the address is on the table."

Ruth took up a slip of paper and read aloud, "Manville Road, N. Why that is near Newington, and a rather humble neighbourhood; even more shabby genteel than this" (with a laugh)—"whom can Mrs. Ayrton be interested in there?"

"Somebody who was once a governess, and has known better days. Mrs. Ayrton is to pay for the lessons."

"Oh! that is kind. But if the poor woman wishes to learn wood-carving as a means of livelihood, I would teach her for nothing."

"I am sure you do enough for everyone without that," said Mrs. Ayrton, rather irritably. "You may be certain your sister-in-law is not going to pay out of any consideration for you."

"I daresay not. But Rose is really philanthropic and would be charitable to us if we would let her. Mr. Creighton, who walked home with me from the omnibus, was scolding me for being too proud."

"Our pride is all that is left us," answered Mrs. Ayrton, haughtily.

"Oh, no!" laughed Ruth. "We have all these things," and she glanced round the daintily-furnished room — where one or two valuable water-colours on the wall, a superb vase of cloisonné enamel on an onyx marble stand, and a real chippendale folding table, spoke of better days. "Do you know that Mrs. Myles told me yesterday that the reason why so many of our neighbours look askance at us is because the fame of our Queen Anne silver tea service has gone abroad. They think that people who come to live in Beatrice Villas and keep such signs of wealth about them must be suspicious characters."

"I can only say I hope they will continue to look askance at us. But your mention of Mrs. Myles reminds me that she hopes to see you this evening. I told her you had news of Leonard, but she wants to hear it from your own lips."

II.

A CURIOUS chain of circumstances had led to Ruth and her mother, Arthur Borlase and the Myleses being companions in misfortune. Formerly they had all known better days. That they were ruined now was chiefly owing to the imprudence of Leonard's father. He was a retired officer in the navy, with an unfortunate mania for speculation. Arthur Borlase had been his ward, and brought up with Leonard: so that the two boys were like brothers.

Captain Myles suddenly inherited a considerable sum of money, sufficient for him to have been comfortable upon all his life, had he not been by nature a gambler. But for him his new means only represented fresh opportunities for speculation. Soon all his own fortune was engulphed, and speedily the money he held in trust for Borlase followed. He dragged down in his own fall Mr. Ayrton, Ruth's father, who was his nearest neighbour and with whom he had grown very intimate. Mr. Ayrton had once been rich. At the time when Captain Myles made his acquaintance he still possessed a fine property, but it was heavily mortgaged, and all his other wealth had been squandered away. He listened to his neighbour's golden dreams and believed them; embarked in the same speculations as the post-captain, and, like him, lost heavily. The two men died within five years of one another, Captain Myles being the first to go, and both left their families almost destitute.

Leonard Myles, at the time of his father's death, had just passed out of Sandhurst. Suddenly he found himself without a penny and with four helpless children upon his hands—his half-brothers and sisters. Captain Myles had been twice married, and was again a widower at the time of his death. Fortunately his mother, a fine energetic old lady, possessed some means: slender ones indeed; but her heart was stout. She immediately gave up her home at Plymouth and came to London to keep house for Leonard and the children.

Arthur Borlase was to live with them. He was ruined also, thanks to Captain Myles, but he was a tender-hearted lad, and loved Leonard too well to visit his father's sins upon him. Only he owned hardly a relative in the world; consequently had nobody to help him, and was forced to accept a clerkship as a means of livelihood. The same occupation was forced upon poor Leonard, who felt that soldiering was far too expensive a career for him. He was bitterly humiliated by his father's conduct, and resolved to expiate it as much as possible in his own person. To lead an idle life in a garrison town while Arthur toiled at a desk and Mrs. Myles denied herself to educate the children was a thing he could not think of, so with a sigh the poor boy renounced his cherished ambition and mounted a stool in Mincing Lane.

Mrs. Myles took a house in Beatrice Villas, and five years later

Mrs. Ayrton and Ruth were glad to become her opposite neighbours.

Mr. Ayrton had died intestate, and his real estate consequently lapsed to his only son by his first marriage, William; a hard-headed, hard-working man, who finding years previously that his father's means were straitened by mismanagement, had himself adopted the profession of a lawyer, and who now set himself energetically to clear off the encumbrances on the property. He made his stepmother and his half-sister an allowance which was probably as much as he could afford, but which by no means sufficed for their wants, and Ruth made up her mind to give lessons in wood-carving—an accomplishment in which, loving the art greatly, she had come to excel.

Mr. Creighton, who had known her from childhood, offered to increase out of his own pocket the modest income allotted to her and her mother, but this both ladies had firmly declined: Ruth because she was really proud and loved to be independent; Mrs. Ayrton because she was haughty and liked the sensation of being a victim. She could not forgive William Ayrton for taking possession of the estate, and hugged the idea of her straitened means as being a kind of unspoken reproach to him.

Meanwhile, she and Ruth made the little parlour in Beatrice Villas look as pretty as possible, and among the relics of her vanished splendour Mrs. Ayrton lived like an invalid and exiled queen.

Ruth, although she had hardly the strength for it, worked unceasingly; and found her lot singularly mitigated by the propinquity to Leonard Myles. In fact, the two young people on meeting again had fallen violently in love, and engaged themselves in a romantic fashion to be married at some period in the dim and distant future. Mrs. Ayrton did not disapprove; but old Mrs. Myles did, and protested energetically. She declared she would never forgive Ruth, but she could not help loving the girl, and always behaved towards her with a mixture of gruffness and tenderness which expressed the mixed nature of her feelings.

"There you are, child," was her greeting to Ruth on the evening of the day when we first make the latter's acquaintance. "You have had a letter from Leonard, I hear. I think he might have written instead to *me*. It would have been more sensible and practical, but I suppose it would not have been sentimental enough—eh?"

Ruth stooped her head to kiss the old lady's fresh but withered cheek, which was neither presented to her nor withheld; then answered lightly: "I should certainly have felt defrauded of my rights if I had not had a letter to-day."

"Your rights! the rights of a slip of a girl! Pray what claim have you on Leonard compared with me who keep his home for him and look after those noisy children? (You need not peer round the room after them; they were naughtier than usual and have been packed off to bed.) But there—I am an old fool to ask. I am

nothing but an old grandmother, and it's a long while since my smiles or tears counted for much with anyone."

Ruth had sat down on the opposite side of the table to the old lady, and leaning her chin on the palm of one hand listened to the scolding with a face of demure gravity contradicted by the incipient laughter of her grey eyes.

"Leonard sends you his love," she observed calmly, as Mrs. Myles paused.

"Very good of him! I beg you will thank him."

"He will write to you in a day or two."

"He need not trouble himself."

"And the business on which he has been sent to Liverpool may detain him another week."

"Humph."

"Where is poor Arthur?" resumed Ruth, after a moment's pause.

"You may well say 'poor Arthur.' He has gone to his room, and is sitting there in the dark, I suppose, brooding on his ill-success. Ruth, it breaks my heart to look at his pale, dejected face when he returns day after day from that weary tramp."

"And he can hear of nothing to do?"

"Nothing. Very often, he says, he can see as soon as he mentions his name that his wretched story is known—and then of course there is but one answer to his application."

"But who has talked about him?" exclaimed Ruth, indignantly. "I am sure Mr. Creighton would not do so."

"Hush! I hear his step." And an instant later the door opened to admit Arthur Borlase.

He was a tall, handsome young man, with the sweetest, frankest face in the world, and Ruth wondered for the hundredth time as she took his silently-offered hand and looked up into his eyes how anyone could suspect *him* of an unworthy action.

"You are not going out this evening, laddie?" said Mrs. Myles to him, tenderly, as he sank rather wearily into a chair near the open window.

"No. I have had enough of the streets for one day." His tone was more discouraged than usual, and Ruth, remembering where she had seen him, felt her heart ache. At this moment a violent bump on the floor of the bedroom above proclaimed that one of the children had come to grief.

"Of course it's Teddy who has fallen out of bed," said Mrs. Myles, rising hastily.

"Let me go to him," volunteered Ruth.

"You'll just be staying where you are," retorted the old Scotchwoman, who loved to think no one but herself could do anything, and she bustled off with an activity that would not have disgraced a girl of sixteen.

Left alone with Arthur Borlase, Ruth sat down near him and laid

her hand gently on his. They were like brother and sister; and of late Ruth's engagement to Leonard had drawn them closer to one another than ever.

Arthur glanced up at Ruth with a melancholy smile. "I was turned away from the Fetherstonhaughs' door to-day," he said, briefly.

"Dear Arthur!" and Ruth squeezed his hand. "Perhaps they were really out."

"Oh, no! I saw by the servant's face that he had had orders not to admit me. I met them—mother and daughter—the other day in Bond Street. They were coming out of a shop and I had the audacity to stop and speak to them. Mrs. Vyse cast a withering glance at me; but I was reckless and announced an intention of calling. Of course the proper directions were then given to the butler and his myrmidons at once."

"And she—Miss Fetherstonhaugh?" asked Ruth.

"She kept her eyes fixed on the ground, and left all the talking, such as it was, to her mother. She barely returned my bow."

"I cannot imagine how they know your—your story. I am sure Mr. Creighton would not speak."

"Not unless he were asked, but if questioned you may be sure he would not defend me. I fancy it is Standen who tells everyone about me. That man for some reason hates me."

"But how can *he* know the Fetherstonhaughs?"

"Oh, he is a pushing fellow, and gets in everywhere. He is secretary to some philanthropic society, which holds evening meetings somewhere in Helen's—in Miss Fetherstonhaugh's neighbourhood. I believe she patronises the concern, and no doubt has known him in that way."

"She cannot like him," exclaimed Ruth, indignantly.

"A man of such irreproachable character! Everyone must like him."

"Dear Arthur, try not to be bitter. You will only make your broodings more sorrowful by indulging angry thoughts," said Ruth with sweet earnestness.

"If everyone were like you and Leonard and dear old lecturing Mrs. Myles, my fate would not seem so intolerable. I could go on hoping against hope, and even take a sort of melancholy pleasure in the misfortunes which made everyone so kind to me. But, oh, Ruth! the outside world is cruel." And poor Arthur, with a groan, hid his face in his hands.

III.

Ruth had carefully abstained from telling Arthur of her engagement to teach Miss Fetherstonhaugh wood-carving. She was afraid that, urged by wounded pride, he would extract from her a promise not to speak of him to the heiress; and she had already secretly made up her mind to introduce the subject as soon as possible. She

knew Helen Fetherstonhaugh a little, having been acquainted with her and her mother, Mrs. Vyse, in the days of that prosperity which, although only a year or two off, seemed to Ruth to have belonged to another life—everything now for her being so changed.

Arthur Borlase and the pretty little heiress had been engaged in a girl and boy fashion when she was still in the schoolroom and he was only eighteen. Mrs. Vyse, believing Borlase to be heir to a fortune, had encouraged his sentiments for her daughter; but as soon as she knew him to be penniless her attitude changed.

She carried off Helen to the Continent for two or three years, and on returning to London to introduce her into society, carefully abstained from renewing an acquaintance which could bring her into contact with Arthur Borlase. It thus happened that Ruth and the heiress had not met for years, and the former wondered very much what changes she should find in Helen, who had been a sweet, impulsive little thing, but was reported now to be worldly and ultra-fashionable.

Ruth looked forward very eagerly to the meeting arranged by Mr. Creighton, and the thought of all that it might bring preoccupied her as she was carried first in an omnibus and then in a train to the remote Northern suburb where lived the other new pupil—Mrs. William Ayrton's protégée.

Ruth, on nearing her destination, took out the address given her and glanced at the name—"*Mrs.* Caird." Ruth the evening previously had read it "*Miss* Caird." Then her pupil was married; or could she be a widow?—a young widow, perhaps, who had to work to support a family. Ruth's tender heart melted at the idea, and she rang the bell at No. 10, Manville Road with a quickened interest in the acquaintance she was about to make. Presently there was a fumble at the lock in answer to her summons, and with some difficulty the door was opened by a lovely little girl. She was apparently about six years of age, and stood gravely regarding the visitor, who on her side was lost in admiration of the little one's brilliant complexion and curls of palest gold.

"Is your mamma in, dear? I am her new teacher," said Ruth, smiling pleasantly.

Upon which the child immediately abandoned the door, and, running to the bottom of the stairs, called out "mamma" in silvery tones, like an elfin clarion. An answer came indistinctly from above, and then the little maiden, turning towards Ruth, said in a funny, old-fashioned way, "Mamma 'spects you. Will you walk in?" and she ushered her visitor into a small, very shabby and rather untidy, sitting-room.

"What is your name?" asked Ruth when she had seated herself.

"Elsie."

"Mine is Ruth. Do you like it?"

No answer but a grave nod.

"Have you any brothers and sisters?"

A silent shake of the head; then suddenly in the clear, small voice came an unexpected answer: "I've nobody but mamma. *She* ought to have papa, but he hasn't been here for monfs and *monfs*."

"Not for months and months!" repeated Ruth, feeling more interested than ever. "Perhaps he is away?"

"No."

"But you can't know?"

"I saw him. I saw him in a cab, and mamma saw him too. And she cried dreadfully."

Ruth was silent. Here was some mystery, and her delicacy of feeling forbade her to seek to penetrate it by cross-questioning a child.

"Have you any dolls?" inquired Elsie abruptly.

"Oh, no; I am too old."

"I don't think you are too old" (looking at Ruth critically from top to toe with an air of kind encouragement). "I know a lady who is quite grown up, and she has lots of dolls."

These interesting revelations were cut short by the opening of the door and the entrance of a fragile-looking, slender little woman, whom Elsie, running forward, took caressingly by the hand. On her first glance at Mrs. Caird, Ruth was struck with her air of ill-health. The colour in her cheeks was far too bright; her eyes were hollow, yet brilliant, and even in her brief passage from the door to the sofa she coughed once or twice—the dry, weak cough of the consumptive.

She held out her hand to Ruth with a pretty smile, and began talking at once of the lessons—saying she would like to begin them without loss of time.

"But wood-carving is fatiguing for the chest. You seem to me to have a—a cold. Do you think you could sit at such work all day?" asked Ruth, hesitatingly.

"Oh! my cold—it is nothing," answered Mrs. Caird eagerly. "You can hear for yourself it is not a *bad* cough. If the summer had only been a little warmer, I should have got well long ago. It must get hot soon, don't you think?"

"Very likely," said Ruth as cheerfully as she could. "Still, I would advise you to take to some other occupation than wood-carving if possible."

"But it isn't possible," Mrs. Caird replied with some irritation. "I am sure if my chest is at all delicate, and I suppose that is what you think, running about in all weathers to give lessons in French and music cannot be good for me. And for such miserable pay too! The people hereabouts are all City clerks, or tradespeople, or undertakers and auctioneers, and they expect to get their daughters taught for nothing."

Ruth glanced round the sitting-room in silence. There were abundant subtle signs of poverty in the shabby, neglected furniture and of that which is worse than poverty—hopelessness and want of energy.

Mrs. Caird herself was poorly-clad and the pretty little girl was untidy—although well-fed and happy-looking.

"Life is such a struggle."

The words came out unexpectedly, as if suggested by some train of thought which her own previous remarks had suggested to Mrs. Caird; but to Ruth they seemed to explain everything. With the quick intuition of a sympathetic mind she understood all that the poor little woman before her must endure in her wearing efforts against ill-health and want of means.

"A struggle indeed," said the girl earnestly. "But it is one which will not last long for you, Mrs. Caird, I trust. People should not work when they have not health, and surely you have friends who must feel that."

"I have no friends," answered Mrs. Caird, and her eyes filled with tears. Involuntarily Ruth took her hand.

"I married against the wishes of my family, and now I cannot appeal to them. And—and my husband is not in good circumstances. He has gone to America to seek his fortune."

"But papa has come back. I saw him in a cab," suddenly interposed Elsie. The colour flamed in Mrs. Caird's cheeks and she gave an uneasy little laugh.

"Elsie fancied she saw him the other day; but she must be mistaken. In fact—I know she is. Mr. Caird is in New York." This was said with a pathetic attempt at matronly dignity; but Elsie, who had been listening wide-eyed to her mother's denial, exclaimed:

"But, mamma, it *was* papa. I saw his scarf-pin."

"A black sphinx-head scarf-pin that Mr. Caird always wore. Elsie persists that the gentleman in the hansom had one just like it. That would be quite sufficient to cause the child to mistake him for her father—wouldn't it?" And Mrs. Caird looked at Ruth with a tremulous smile—a smile that seemed to implore her to agree.

Elsie was beginning another protest, but Ruth cut it short with a question about dolls. She had read the torture and heart-sickness of doubt in Mrs. Caird's eyes, and the sight stabbed her tender heart. She stayed a few moments longer talking and laughing with Elsie, then rose to leave, after fixing with her new pupil the date of the first lesson. "I feel as if I had found a friend as well as a teacher," said Mrs. Caird, winningly, as she stood on the doorstep and pressed Ruth's hand in farewell. "I shall never cease to be grateful to Mrs. Ayrton for having sent you to me."

Elsie was even more affectionate and demonstrative, and Ruth finally departed with her heart full of pity and her mind of wonder.

Which was the true story, she asked herself—the mother's or the child's? Was Mr. Caird in America, or had he, as seemed more likely, abandoned his wife? And the sphinx-head scarf-pin: who was it wore just such a one among all Ruth's acquaintances? No

one that she knew well certainly, and yet she was positive that she had seen a pin of the kind on some gentleman not so very long ago. These speculations occupied her all through her return journey to the West End, and brought her to Miss Fetherstonhaugh's door in what seemed a very short time.

She was ushered upstairs at once, and into a splendid drawing-room, where she found herself in the presence of two ladies. One, indolently reposing in a low arm-chair, was Mrs. Vyse, and Ruth had just time to note that her complexion seemed more pearly, and her infantile locks more golden even than of yore, when Miss Fetherstonhaugh, who had been standing near the window, turned quickly and came forward with outstretched hands. "Ruth!"

"Helen."

It did Ruth's heart good to hear herself called in the old familiar fashion, to feel the warm, cordial grasp of the young heiress's hands, and to note the sweet pleasure in her beautiful face.

"Sit down and let me have a good look at you. You are the same quiet little mouse as ever, I see," said Helen, leading Ruth impulsively to a sofa.

"I presume you will allow Miss Ayrton to speak first to me, my dear," frigidly interposed Mrs. Vyse, and extended the tips of her white and heavily gemmed fingers.

"It was quite a surprise to us to hear from Mr. Creighton that you were living in London. We always imagined that you would have—ah—emigrated."

The subtle insolence of this speech brought the colour into Ruth's cheeks. "We decided to remain in the old country as long as we could earn a decent livelihood here," she answered steadily.

"A decent——" repeated Mrs. Vyse, dreamily, putting up her eye-glass, and contemplating Ruth through it. "I suppose you speak figuratively, for your half-brother makes you an allowance."

"He gives us as much as he can afford, and perhaps a little more than he can afford conveniently, for he has a large family and is trying to liberate the estate. But, Mrs. Vyse, when I say 'we,' I was not thinking only of myself. Somehow, since the catastrophe which resulted sooner or later in the ruin of so many of our mutual acquaintances—yours and mine, I mean—mamma and I and the Myleses and Arthur Borlase have looked upon one another as belonging to the same family," said Ruth boldly, with a quick, covert glance at Helen.

Miss Fetherstonhaugh had winced visibly at the sound of Arthur's name, but before she could speak, even had she intended doing so, her mother remarked: "You are touchingly quixotic. Most people prefer to expel even the black sheep which belong to them; you deliberately open your fold to a stranger of that description."

"Indeed! to whom?"

"Miss Ayrton, I do not know why you should choose deliberately

to misunderstand me. I allude, of course, to no one but that disreputable young Borlase."

"Poor Arthur!" said Ruth, feelingly. "If you were to see him, Mrs. Vyse, you would never doubt his innocence, and you would pity him for all he suffers."

"I am confidently informed that his guilt admits of no question. And as he shows himself quite unrepentant, and apparently succeeds in deluding people, I do not know why I or any conscientious person should be expected to pity him."

"The carriage is at the door," announced the butler, and Mrs. Vyse rose to attire herself for her afternoon drive. "I hope you will be able to fix on some morning hour with Helen for the lessons," she said. "I do not wish this craze for wood-carving to deprive me of my daughter's company in my visits. Helen has social duties which she shows a tendency to overlook. Good-bye, Miss Ayrton. Is your mother well? Some day, if I can discover Beatrice Terrace—or Gardens? Oh! Villas——Beatrice Villas—I will call."

And Mrs. Vyse rustled out of the room.

"Do you really believe Arthur—Mr. Borlase, I mean—to be innocent?" asked Helen, as soon as the door had closed on her mother. She was flushed and looked eager and troubled, yet, as Ruth remarked, had lifted up no voice in defence of her former lover. "The proofs against him were so strong," she continued.

"They were unmistakable against *someone*, but there is no evidence to satisfy me that that person was Arthur," replied Ruth, fervently.

"You seem very fond of him," said Helen, and her tone sounded irritated.

"We are like brother and sister, particularly since Leonard Myles and I have been engaged."

"Oh, you are engaged to Leonard Myles!"

Miss Fetherstonhaugh's relief at the news was unmistakable. Ruth looked at her curiously. "Do you *like* to believe in Arthur's guilt?" she asked.

"*Like!* You little know me. But I cannot bear to be deceived in people. And everyone says I should be wrong to give any countenance to Arthur now."

"Who is 'everyone'?"

"Mr. Creighton, and Mr. Standen —"

"Oh! Do you see much of Mr. Standen?"

"He is secretary to a charity in which I am interested: an evening class for shop-girls. I meet him often there. He is so good. He leads such a noble life. He forces me to believe what he tells me."

"But you cannot like him?" exclaimed Ruth, a new fear suddenly presenting itself to her mind.

"One is bound to admire so many people one does not like," said Miss Fetherstonhaugh. "That is part of one's daily discipline."

Ruth thought she began to understand her now: an ardent girl without much penetration into character, but with a great desire to do good; just the sort of nature, in fact, over whom an unscrupulous, hypocritical person would gain a great deal of influence.

"I thought—I had heard, that is—that you were so fond of society and amusement."

"No, indeed," replied Helen in eager denial. "I have to consider mamma's tastes, of course; and she is wretched if I don't accompany her everywhere. Then we are in such a set—all rich, party-giving people. I have no friends. I have had none since those old days when I knew you."

Ruth took her hand and stroked it gently, feeling touched to meet with a sorrow that was all made up of loneliness, and had nothing to do with poverty. Herself—she had been in danger of forgetting that money does not console for every woe.

"When Mr. Creighton told me about you, and how you taught wood-carving, I was determined to send for you," resumed Helen when she was calmer. "Somehow, of late years I seem to have been living in a globe of crystal, through which I could look at things, but through which nothing tangible could reach me."

"Not even the influence of philanthropists like Mr. Standen?" asked Ruth rather maliciously.

"You must not laugh at him," replied Helen gravely. "He is really very good, and he makes me do things even when I don't mean to. But—lately I have grown afraid of him," she added in lowered tones.

"Why?" exclaimed Ruth.

"You force me to tell you everything," said the heiress after a moment's hesitation. "It must be your exquisite sympathy and the warm glow of feeling and memory I felt on seeing you again. The reason why I fear Mr. Standen is that I think he wants to marry me."

"But surely you would not do such a thing? Surely Mrs. Vyse would never consent to it?"

"You have not heard then? But of course not; the news is so recent. Mr. Standen has suddenly become a millionaire. He has inherited unexpectedly a fortune from an uncle in Australia. He found the telegram at his lodgings last evening, and told me of it afterwards at the meeting of our Society. He looked radiant, and something in his manner made me sure he meant to propose."

"But you need not accept him!" cried Ruth. "And unless you really love him you would be miserable if you did."

"I am miserable as it is," replied Helen, dejectedly. "Everything has failed me; friendship as well as love. In the life I lead, and which seems to be the life everyone expects from a girl of my wealth, there seems to be no rest—no leisure. And Mr. Standen is a good man; he would help and direct me. He would teach me how to spend my money properly. Now that he is rich himself,

there is no end to the good we might do together. Surely that would be better than love or ordinary happiness?"

"Nothing can be better than happiness," said Ruth, energetically, "if it is a happiness which we deserve. You are thinking of marrying Mr. Standen, my poor Helen, because you are morbid and weary-hearted. But if you could be sure that Arthur is innocent, would you not rather marry him?"

The colour flushed into Miss Fetherstonhaugh's cheeks, but she answered in a low tone: "Yes. Only," she added immediately, with a feverish impatience, "it will not be proved: everything is against him; against him and me; and meanwhile this waiting, this dreary void, this aimless existence, are more than I can bear. It will be better for me to marry Mr. Standen and forget Arthur."

"To remember Arthur now that he is poor and unhappy and unjustly accused is the one small thing you can do for him," said Ruth, gravely. Miss Fetherstonhaugh made no answer, but her eyes filled with tears. "At least," continued Ruth, imploringly, "you must promise me that you will not accept Mr. Standen in a hurry, and that you will give me due notice first."

"I will do my best to obey you. But what *can* you expect to do for me?"

"I do not know as yet; but I feel as if I were on the track of something that will change your life and Arthur's," said Ruth, rising. "Now I must go. And after all, we have settled nothing about the wood-carving. Shall I come on Wednesdays and Fridays at eleven?"

"Yes."

"Then good-bye. And, Helen, try to be brave. There is such bitter, bitter misery in the world, that no one has the right to brood over the imperfections of his individual lot."

And Ruth, with a bright smile, which lighted up her pretty, pale face like a glory, took her leave.

IV.

When Ruth at last reached home again at afternoon tea-time, she found Mrs. Ayrton looking flushed and irritated, and Mrs. William Ayrton sitting opposite to her with her habitual air of calm superiority.

She was an excellent woman—this sister-in-law of Ruth's—orderly, methodical, charitable as far as her means would allow, and willing to do most people a good turn. And yet by dint of unruffled self-complacency she managed to exasperate a great number of people, and Mrs. Ayrton the elder amongst them. Ruth, on beholding the two ladies, felt immediately that there had been the usual affray, and she rushed upon neutral ground.

"How kind it was of you, Rose, to find me that pupil, poor Mrs. Caird. I went to see her this morning."

"It is rather a long way to go; but I supposed you would prefer a pupil who lives far-off to no pupil at all."

"Ruth has plenty to do," said Mrs. Ayrton.

"But not half enough," interposed her daughter, hastily. "And even if I had not a spare two hours in the week I think I should invent them to go to Mrs. Caird. She interests me; and so she must you, Rose. You have been so kind to her."

"It is one's duty to be kind," responded Mrs. William Ayrton, primly. "Otherwise I feel no extravagant interest in Mrs. Caird. She is so helpless."

"Poor little thing! She is so ill. Have you known her long?"

"I met her last spring at Bournemouth. She was there taking care of Mr. Crane's children whilst he was abroad on business. You remember Mr. Crane, who lost his wife last year?"

"Perfectly. And had Mrs. Caird been a governess in his family?"

"No. Mr. Crane told me rather a romantic story. It seems he met her in Antwerp, where she was governess in a Belgian family. He only saw her once or twice, I think. And then a few weeks later he met her in Paris with a 'tall, fair Englishman,' as he described it, whom she introduced as her husband. She looked very pleased and happy; delighted to escape from her drudgery (all governesses talk about the drudgery they endure, and yet most of them are quite happy, I am sure). But Mrs. Caird being one of your pretty, helpless-looking women, of course Mr. Crane sympathised with her. And when he met her again some years later by accident in London, and found her in distress, he immediately sent her down to Bournemouth with his children."

"Did he tell you why she was in such distress?"

"Her husband had failed in business and gone to America to try and make a new fortune."

This was Mrs. Caird's own story; evidently there was nothing more to be learnt about her. Then why did Ruth still feel that there was a mystery? She could not have explained her conviction, and yet there it was, being founded, doubtless, on some of those subtle impressions which we receive all day long, but which escape our definition.

The days went on. Ruth gave her lessons to Miss Fetherstonhaugh and Mrs. Caird; and the fortnight drew to a close, and Leonard Myles came home. He had been to Liverpool on business for the firm which employed him, and his return made occasion for a little feast. Mrs. Ayrton and Ruth went to supper at the Myleses, and then, when the children had been sent to bed and Arthur had gone out for one of his melancholy evening strolls, Mrs. Ayrton and the old lady played bézique, and Ruth and Leonard sat under the stars, amongst the sweet smelling flowers in the little back-garden. It was not much of a garden; but it was very carefully tended by Mrs. Myles, helped in turns by all her "young people," as she called Ruth and Arthur and Leonard collectively, and it made a fragrant, dreamy little lounging place in these balmy summer evenings.

"Have you had any adventures in Liverpool, Lennie?" asked Ruth, when they had talked a little of themselves.

"Well, darling, Liverpool isn't fertile in adventures, I should think; and then I had but one thought, which was to get through my business quickly and come back to you. But I made rather an interesting acquaintance in a blind fiddler and his sister, in whose house I lodged. Their ordinary tenant was away, and the place was recommended to me as being more comfortable and cheaper than the hotel. And really, Miss Thornton was as kind to me always as grannie is when I am ill, which is the only time that I am petted at home."

"Insatiable boy! I am sure I pet you."

"Oh! Do you?"

Ruth laughed, a little tender laugh, for Leonard, big, brown, manly fellow that he was, spent his days in doing things for other people, but never allowed anyone to take trouble for him.

"I am glad you found someone at last to appreciate you as you deserve," she said, with mock solemnity. "But tell me about Miss Thornton. Is she young and lovely?"

"A fascinating creature of sixty, with silver hair and a heart of gold. I wish you could see her with her brother—it is a picture of devotion. He is quite blind now, but composes a little, and still plays marvellously from memory. And the rich people in Liverpool make a great fuss over him, and have him and his sister continually to their parties. She plays his accompaniments, and they would be very comfortably off, only that they lost money (to be in the fashion, I suppose) by the failure of a bank. So not to leave their old house, of which he knows every inch, they let two rooms, and that is how I went there."

"They must be very happy together?"

"They would be," answered Leonard, "only they make themselves very *unhappy* about a niece, the daughter of their youngest sister, who was left to their care by her dying mother, and whom they seem to have worshipped."

"And did she die?"

"No, but when the failure of the bank came, she insisted against their wishes on going out as a governess, and went to some family in Antwerp."

"Antwerp?"

"Yes. You seem astonished," said Leonard, surprised himself.

"I am interested," answered Ruth, her heart beginning to beat more quickly. "But go on with your story, Lennie; I will explain later."

"She had not been there many months when she got married to some fellow called Caird. It seems to have been all done in a great hurry, for the news of her engagement and her wedding came all together. She wrote once or twice from Paris afterwards,

apparently in a state of the greatest happiness, and then her letters abruptly ceased, and from that hour to this, the Thorntons have been able to obtain no tidings of her. Miss Thornton went herself to Antwerp, but what she heard there only increased her uneasiness. The girl had been in a Belgian family. She told them nothing of her intended marriage until it had taken place; she profited by their having gone all into the country one day, leaving her in Antwerp to get the wedding over, and then when they returned she announced the news to them and left them immediately. They were very angry, for they thought she had acted with great duplicity, and they gave themselves no further thought about her. In Paris Miss Thornton came upon some trace of the pair, but only to lose it again immediately."

Leonard paused.

"And now let me tell you what *I* know." And Ruth recounted her visit to Manville Road, and all that had come of it.

Leonard was extremely astonished and, as may be imagined, no less interested. "It is evidently the same person," he said. "Should I let the Thorntons know at once, or would it perhaps be better for you, Ruth, to persuade Mrs. Caird to write herself to her uncle and aunt? It is not always wise to interfere in the private affairs of people who hide from their relatives unless one knows *why* they hide."

"Perhaps it would be better to wait a little. Possibly Mrs. Caird's pride makes her shrink from owning to her family that her husband has deserted her. Lennie, *who* is it we know or have seen that wears a sphinx-head scarf-pin?"

"Oh, lots of fellows in the City. The fashion has percolated there after being given up by the 'mashers,'" replied Leonard, carelessly.

"Come in, young people, come in," suddenly called Mrs. Myles from the window. "Mrs. Ayrton is tired, and wishes to go home."

"Mamma tired," repeated Ruth; "she cannot be well." And a glance at Mrs. Ayrton's face showed she was right.

Leonard gave the suffering lady his arm to her own house, and helped her upstairs; then went for a doctor, who on seeing the patient, expressed his belief that she was likely to have a sharp attack. This proved to be the case, and for three weeks Ruth was kept in constant attendance on her mother. She had to give up, for the time being, many of her pupils, and among them Miss Fetherstonhaugh and Mrs. Caird. To the latter, indeed, it was impossible she should go, on account of the distance; so it was thought better that Leonard should write to the Thorntons, telling them that in all probability their niece was found, and detailing the circumstances.

Miss Thornton replied, expressing her own and her brother's unbounded joy and thankfulness, but deprecating all precipitate action, which might lead "the poor darling" to hide herself again. She left

the matter for the present in Leonard's hands, only enclosing in her letter a cheque which was to be forwarded to Mrs. Caird anonymously.

When at last Mrs. Ayrton was well again, Ruth wrote to Helen and to Mrs. Caird, announcing that she could resume the lessons whenever they pleased. From the latter she received no answer, but Miss Fetherstonhaugh replied at once: "Come and see me immediately; but not for any lessons. I am too much occupied. I am to be married to Mr. Standen in four days."

Ruth, with a pang at the thought of Arthur, hurried off, and soon found herself in her friend's presence. "You promised not to accept him precipitately," she said in a tone of some reproach as she kissed the pale cheeks of the heiress.

"I know I did," replied Helen, agitatedly, "but you were away, and *he* was urgent. I felt so disturbed, so perplexed, any decision seemed better than the endless racking doubt and uncertainty. And, Ruth, I took an opportunity of seeing Mr. Creighton, and made him tell me the whole wretched story of the forgery. I do not, alas, I *cannot* see how one is to believe in Arthur's innocence."

"I imagine Mr. Creighton told you nothing but what I have heard, and yet *I* believe in his innocence," replied Ruth, gravely. "What did Mr. Creighton say to you?"

"I will repeat the whole story," said Helen, who seemed in a state of feverish, miserable excitement. "On a particular day last January, Arthur Borlase was sent to the bank to cash several cheques for the firm, and he took the opportunity to utter a forged one for fifty pounds. The crime was brought home to him—oh, yes! fully, fully," cried Miss Fetherstonhaugh, wringing her hands with a gesture of despair. "It was proved that he had been gambling on the race-courses; had lost heavily; had been forced to borrow money from his fellow-clerks, and even from Mr. Standen, who told about it most reluctantly; and the clerk who cashed the cheque testified to Arthur's identity."

"That is to say," interrupted Ruth, "he said he *thought* the utterer of the forged cheque was Arthur; but the day was dark, and the clerk, by his own confession, short-sighted. He happened also to be in great distress of mind on that particular day, owing to the death of his wife. It was some little while before the forgery was discovered, and the clerk could no longer be quite sure that two young men from Creighton's had not been at the bank that day. What he did declare positively was that if Arthur had presented *all* the cheques, then he must have been there twice in the same afternoon."

"But the clerk would have noticed if two different people had come from the same firm," said Miss Fetherstonhaugh.

"The bank is always very crowded at that hour, and there is a superficial resemblance between Arthur and Mr. Standen. Both are tall and fair."

"Mr. Standen? But it could not have been he. It could not. He never needed money. He leads the quietest of lives. Nobody has ever breathed a word against him. Mr. Creighton believes in him implicitly. Oh, Ruth, Ruth! find some more improbable theory to convince me that the forger was not Arthur. To be sure of his innocence I would lay down my life," cried poor Helen, and hid her face in her hands.

"My poor friend!" exclaimed Ruth feelingly, and going up to the agitated girl, she drew her gently into a warm embrace and soothed her as she might have done a child. "My poor Helen! and it is with such feelings as these that you mean to marry Mr. Standen?"

"He guides me; he dominates me," said the heiress mournfully. "With him I feel that I shall lead a worthy life. My present existence is bitter and barren as Dead Sea apples."

"I cannot understand his having such an influence over you," said Ruth. "To me his very face is unpleasant. This is a new photograph of him, is it not?" And she drew a copy of the portrait towards her out of a heap that was lying on the table. Suddenly, as she looked at it her expression altered; she seized a magnifying glass that was at hand and peered through it anxiously, her colour fading and her breath coming more quickly as she looked.

"Helen, will you let me have one of these photographs for a day or two?" she asked then in a strangely quiet voice.

"Oh, yes. You can have as many as you like," replied Helen indifferently, speaking like a person in a dream.

In the midst of all her excitement at the new possibility which had occurred to her, Ruth could hardly help smiling at this reply; it sounded so little like the sort of speech which usually issues from the lips of a bride-elect!

"I must go now," she said, bending to kiss her friend. "Take courage, Helen, and unless you really love Mr. Standen more than you think, break off your engagement even at the eleventh hour."

"I dare not do that, Ruth. Besides, I should be no happier free than bound. But I look forward to Thursday with an extraordinary horror. I shall be better when the deed is irrevocably done. You will come to my wedding? Yours will be the only face I shall care to see."

Ruth promised, then hurried away; called a cab as soon as she reached the street, and had herself driven to Manville Road. Her brain was in a whirl, and every pulse bounding at the idea which had taken possession of her, while hope that it might be realised and fear that it might be destroyed alternately filled her mind.

V.

Elsie's little bright face and tangle of golden curls appeared at the window of the house in Manville Road when Ruth's cab drew up, and the next moment the child had flown to open the door.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, in her cordial, old-fashioned way, holding up a dewy-rose mouth to be kissed. "Mammy is very ill. The doctor comes every day."

"Is she in bed?"

"No, in there; on the sofa," said Elsie, pointing to the sitting-room, and then running off there to announce the visitor's arrival.

Through the open door Ruth caught sight of Mrs. Caird, who had raised her flushed and wasted face from the sofa cushions, and was looking towards the entrance with eyes of haggard eagerness. At the announcement of "Miss Ayrton" made by Elsie, her head fell back with a heart-sick movement, and when Ruth reached her side, she was lying quite still with closed eyes, through which the tears forced themselves slowly.

"Dear Mrs. Caird!" said Ruth, tenderly, kneeling down beside the sofa; "has anything new happened to distress you?"

No answer: only a slow, hopeless shake of the head; a deeper contraction of the pallid brows.

"When she heard the cab, she thought it might be bringing papa," suddenly interposed Elsie, looking at Ruth as she spoke, with the pretty, solemn pathos of a child who feels pity for a sorrow that she cannot understand.

Before Ruth—too moved to speak immediately—could answer, Mrs. Caird herself broke the silence. "It was foolish of me to expect him," she said, in low, bitter tones. "I might have known he would not come. But the other day, twenty-five pounds reached me anonymously. They made me think he might have remembered me at last."

Elsie had tripped away to the window again, and Ruth, lowering her voice so that the child might not hear, said earnestly: "Then you do not think he is in America?"

"I believe he never went there. Oh! yes, I told you so; I have told myself so many times—many; but a secret conviction always contradicted me, and I am sure that it was he whom we saw that day Elsie and I were in town together. I tried to persuade myself we were mistaken; but now I can no longer keep up that pretence; I am too heart-sick and weary. It is a kind of relief to believe the worst."

As she finished speaking, Mrs. Caird drew away the hand Ruth had taken in both her own, and turned her face to the wall, with the gesture of one for whose sorrow even compassion the most loving is a burden too great to bear.

"Then he may still be in London. We could find him—bring him to you," said Ruth, energetically.

"To what end? That he might tell me once again, as he did on the last cruel occasion when I saw him, that our marriage was not legal!"

"Not legal!" repeated Ruth, consternated.

"So he said. I can feel the dagger-thrust his words planted in

my heart still. I daresay he will be glad when I die. Perhaps he will be kind to Elsie then. He registered her birth in his own name, so I suspected nothing of his baseness until that awful day when we parted. His announcement that he meant to leave me came quite unexpectedly. We had struggled on together through such months and years of poverty; I believed *that* of itself would have drawn us closer."

"But why were you so poor? Had he no employment?" asked Ruth.

"He was a clerk in the City; but he must have been badly paid. He never seemed to have any money. The fifty pounds he put into my hands on leaving me was the largest sum he ever brought home. He had come into a small legacy, he said, and this would enable him to go to America."

"Fifty pounds!" repeated Ruth, half to herself, turning pale with excitement. "Dear Mrs. Caird, forgive my cross-questioning you; but I have a reason. Can you tell me the exact date of your parting with your husband?"

"I am not likely to forget it," was the answer, given with a heart-breaking smile. "It was the 13th of January."

The very day after the forgery! Ruth's heart began beating almost to suffocation. Trembling, she drew out Mr. Standen's photograph, and Mrs. Caird, catching sight of it, uttered a cry. The sound of this brought Elsie to her mother's side at once, and the moment the child's eyes lighted on the portrait, she exclaimed: "Papa, papa!"

"You know him? You have seen him?" cried Mrs. Caird, clutching Ruth's hands with feverish eagerness.

"I know and have seen him," replied the girl. "But I have a great deal to tell you, and you must listen to me with courage and patience." Then, sending Elsie away, in as few words as possible she related the facts with which the reader is already acquainted, namely, that "Mr. Caird" was really Standen; that he had lately inherited an enormous fortune, and had engaged himself to Miss Fetherstonhaugh.

"He will soon be able to marry her without shocking anybody's scruples. My days are numbered," said the injured woman, with unnatural calm.

"But there are two people who love you dearly, whom you must see before you die," replied Ruth, solemnly, and proceeded to speak of the Thorntons.

Mrs. Caird was greatly agitated. "Dear Uncle Edwin! Dear, dear Aunt Hester! I have longed to see them; but first it was his —my husband's—desire, and then the bitter shame my confession must have involved, which kept me silent. But now you can write —oh, yes! everything is easy to bear when one is on the brink of the grave."

Ruth would fain, if she could, have appeased the aching of her

own heart by trying to believe and saying that Mrs. Caird might yet live—but Death was written on the worn young face; and, after all, Ruth asked herself: Had not life been too unkind to the loving, wronged little woman to make anyone desire that she should cling to it?

At Mrs. Caird's own dictation, Ruth wrote a letter to Miss Thornton, praying her to come to London as quickly as possible, with her brother. She sat at Mrs. Caird's own little-used writing-table for her task, and had some difficulty in finding materials for the purpose.

As she was putting away the blotter again, a paper fell from between its leaves to the ground, and Ruth, on lifting it, was surprised to see the signature of Creighton Brothers written several times across the page. She knew the signature well, and recognised it at once; yet had hardly done so before she perceived that it was a clever forgery. The signature, as has been said, was repeated several times with varying success, as far as its resemblance to the real thing went; but the final attempt, that which figured at the bottom of the page, was as near to the original as possible. Ruth turned the sheet round, and on the other side found half-a-dozen lines, beginning "Dear Standen," and containing a threatening request for the reimbursement of a loan. The date of the note was the 8th January—four days before the incident of the forged cheque. Ruth glanced at Mrs. Caird, and finding herself unobserved, slipped the tell-tale sheet into her pocket.

Her loyal heart smote her a little as she did so; and yet, while everything was still so uncertain, she could not inflict on the dying woman the further anguish of suggesting to her that the father of her child might be a forger.

She took a kind farewell of the invalid, and had the satisfaction of noting that the prospect of meeting her uncle and aunt had cheered her a little. Then once again she hailed a hansom, and was soon being rapidly driven towards Mr. Creighton's private house. It was about half-past five, and Ruth calculated that she would just find the old gentleman on his return from the City. Her previsions were justified, and greatly astonished were both he and his wife (a comfortable, motherly old lady, who had always felt inclined to stand up for Arthur) at the story which their visitor poured out to them.

"Softly, softly," said Mr. Creighton at last. "We must not jump to conclusions. One story is good until another is told. How do we know, Miss Ruth, that this Mrs. Caird has not been taking you in?"

"Papa, I am ashamed of you," interposed Mrs. Creighton. "Don't you hear what Ruth says about her, poor dying creature—with such a dear little girl, too!"

Mr. Creighton's eyes twinkled; his wife's reasonings always delighted him, although he declared that they came from her heart instead of her head. "Your arguments are irrefragable, my dear,"

he replied, gravely, "but unfortunately the mind of a man of business is so constituted as to require proof. For the last six months I—justly, as far as appearances went—have been regarding young Borlase as an unprincipled spendthrift, while for twice as many years I, in common with everyone, have looked upon Standen as a mirror of respectability."

"A conceited, sandy-haired young man—I never could endure him," interrupted Mrs. Creighton.

"But now surely you must see that there is presumptive evidence against him," said Ruth, earnestly. "His leaving that poor woman and the child almost to starve, his masquerading under a false name, this paper which I have found, the various dates which correspond —can all this fail to convince you?"

"You would make a capital lawyer, Miss Ruth, and certainly the brief you hold is a good one. We must try and collect more facts. These Thorntons should be communicated with."

"I have written," said Ruth.

"We must telegraph. And this Mr. Crane who saw your poor little friend with her husband in Paris must be found. Your sister-in-law could help us there."

"And Miss Fetherstonhaugh? Are you going to allow her to commit bigamy?" inquired Mrs. Creighton, ironically.

"Um—um—bigamy. Standen or Caird—by George! now I come to think of it, the fellow's name is James Caird Standen—maintains that the marriage in Antwerp was not legal. This must be investigated, but in any case if before Thursday at eleven o'clock we can prove Standen to be a villain, I suppose Miss Fetherstonhaugh will give him up?"

"Of course she will," said Mrs. Creighton. "Poor persecuted young thing! She never would have accepted the wretch if it had not been for—for ——"

"For whom?" inquired Mr. Creighton, demurely, delighted to see his wife hesitate.

"For you," she replied, promptly. "I am sure you never opened your lips about Standen, except to praise him. Ruth and I never agreed with you. You will stop to dinner, child, won't you?" This to Ruth, who had risen, smiling, to take her leave.

"No, thank you, dear Mrs. Creighton; I have been away from home for hours. Besides, I am longing to tell my news to Leonard."

"Well, don't tell anyone else," said Mr. Creighton; "and leave everything to me. Miss Fetherstonhaugh shall not become Mrs. Standen on Thursday if I can prevent it."

Ruth was comforted for the moment by these assurances, but as the days went on and she heard nothing more, her anxiety rose to fever heat.

On the very evening before the wedding her suspense was so intolerable that she was about to send the barely less anxious,

though cooler, Leonard off to Mr. Creighton, when a telegram was put into her hand.

It was from her old friend, and just said, "Things promising well. Go to the church to-morrow and keep quiet."

"I wish it told us more," said Ruth to Leonard.

"It tells us as much as we are likely to hear. No use in my going to Mr. Creighton now. He would only snub me. So just go to bed, Ruth, and try to sleep. You look like a ghost, and take everyone's troubles but your own far too much to heart."

Rarely had St. George's, Hanover Square, been more crowded than on the next morning, about the hour when Miss Fetherstonhaugh was to be married.

The pretty heiress had a large circle of acquaintances, and Mrs. Vyse, who loved display, had invited as many of them as possible. One or two she saw with an unwelcome eye—Ruth and Leonard among them; but these Helen had insisted on inviting.

Uninvited, hidden in a dark corner of the gallery, was poor Arthur Borlase. Ruth detected him at once, and her heart ached for him as she divined the miserable, restless longing that had sent him there to see the destruction of his last poor hopes. Oh! would Mr. Creighton be as good as his word? Would Standen be unmasked at last?

The bridegroom elect, who since his accession to fortune, had acquired numberless new friends, arrived punctually, accompanied by a fashionable-looking best man, and proceeded to hide himself in the approved fashion until his bride's appearance. More guests trooped in, and Ruth, sick with anxiety, looked every moment for Mr. Creighton, yet saw him not. His wife indeed appeared and nodded reassuringly, which brought some brief and insufficient consolation; but five minutes later, Ruth wrung her hands in silent anguish, for a flutter among the bridesmaids, a movement at the door, and a gleam of white satin and lace showed that the bride was there. Helen, leaning on the arm of Major Vyse, her stepfather, advanced slowly up the aisle, looking so deadly pale and so unmistakably unhappy, that several of the wedding-guests exchanged glances of consternation.

She reached the railings, Standen emerged, the bridesmaids gathered round, the officiating clergyman had opened his book, when suddenly there was a stir at the bottom of the church, and Ruth, turning, saw the welcome face of Mr. Creighton, who led little Elsie by the hand, and was followed by a sweet-looking woman, with silver hair, on whose arm lent a tall, blind man, while behind them came yet another gentleman, in whom Ruth recognised Mr. Crane.

"I forbid this marriage," suddenly called out Mr. Creighton, and at the same moment Elsie, slipping from his grasp, darted forward like a swallow and clung round Mr. Standen, calling out, "Papa! papa!"

He thrust her away savagely, and she burst into tears. Ruth, coming forward hastily, took the sobbing little thing into her arms,

and then the new-comers, with the bride and her parents, Standen, Ruth and the clergyman, trooped into the vestry, and stood there, an agitated, excited group, while Mr. Creighton in as few words as possible told his story.

"I am sorry to have been obliged to bring the child," he said, "but it was necessary to prove the identity of this—this gentleman" (pointing to Standen), "and the unfortunate woman whom he has wronged is dying. Mr. Crane here is prepared to swear, if necessary, that Miss Thornton, when meeting him in Paris, introduced Mr. Standen—or Caird as he called himself—as her husband, and that he tacitly acquiesced in the title. Mr. Thornton and his sister have other proofs, and although Mr. Standen may be able to establish that the ceremony he basely went through in Antwerp was not a legal one, I doubt if Miss Fetherstonhaugh will still wish to marry him."

"I?" cried Helen. "Ah! Never—never! Indeed, I think I have been mad."

So that was the end of the projected wedding, and the rest of the story is briefly told.

Standen, to avoid the inquiry and consequent exposure with which Mr. Creighton threatened him, confessed to the forgery, owned to his mock marriage—a mock one only in the sense that all the formalities required for the marriage of English subjects abroad had not been complied with—and agreed to settle a sufficient sum upon Elsie, whom the Thorntons adopted, after her poor mother had been laid to rest.

Arthur was given Standen's former post in Mr. Creighton's office, but surrendered it in a few months when Helen married him, as she had plenty of work for him to do in managing her large estates, and wished him also to go into parliament. So then Leonard was taken into the vacant place, and a distant relative shortly afterwards leaving him some money, he purchased a share in the business and became a junior partner. But even before that happened, he had married Ruth, to whom Mrs. Myles declared herself quite reconciled, since it was to her energy and insight that Arthur Borlase owed his justification. But several people believed that the crabbed old lady had always really loved Ruth, and had only been looking for some excuse to tell her so.

A REGENT STREET ROMANCE.

By the Author of "My Saturdays."

Scene I.

A CLUSTER of human atoms, of all sorts and sizes, increased every minute from the outside, all eager to see what is not their business, to the neglect of whatever is; a calmly-authoritative policeman checking a fidgety cab-horse, but by no means checking the flow of emphatic asseverations from the cabman; another blue-coated embodiment of Law forming a central point to the shifting group, and keeping back its items from pressing on the real centre, which was on the pavement, out of sight of all but the innermost and the tallest. A child run over in Regent Street: no uncommon occurrence in itself, but none the less piteous. The poor little thing was screaming terribly, and would have been writhing, but that a young lady was holding it firmly, though tenderly, while a gentleman was making a rough examination of its injuries.

"Its leg is broken," he said, "below the knee. I daresay it is not hurt otherwise, and that is a simple matter. Some handkerchiefs, please."

Pocket-handkerchiefs of all sizes and colours were rained on Rolf Rolleston; and with the promptitude of a man who knew what he was about, he made a splint of his umbrella, and bandaged the injured limb to it.

"Now, policeman, if you'll call a cab, I'll take the child to the hospital."

"May I go with you?" asked the young lady. "It may be easier in my arms, and it would be awkward for you to manage alone."

"It is very kind of you. If you don't mind, it will perhaps be better."

"I like to help," said the girl gently.

The cab drew up, and Mona Leighton was just stepping into it first, in order to receive the child in her arms, when a rather noticeable figure came forward. It was that of a middle-aged man, perfectly dressed, and apparently a gentleman. His face was rather handsome, and yet not at all attractive; it was fully bearded, and the eyes were set rather close, and were slightly oblique towards the nose. They had a cold fixity, and an apparent power of seeing without looking—the sort of vivid unintelligence that you may recognise in the bright eyes of the anaconda at the Zoological Gardens. He had a somewhat foreign air, but there was no trace of an un-English accent in his speech.

"I have only just caught sight of you, Miss Leighton; I hope you have not been alarmed by the crowd. Allow me to see you home."

"Oh, no, thank you, Count Viaveda," said Mona hurriedly. "I am going to help Mr. Rolleston to take this poor little child to the hospital."

"Mr. Rolleston's disinterested philanthropy is well known," answered the Count, turning to Rolf with a slight bow and a most unpleasant smile; "but he can scarcely expect to have young ladies like Miss Leighton at his command to carry it out. In fact, I am so certain that Mrs. Leighton would object to her doing anything of the sort, that I am going to request her to return home under my escort."

Mona stood irresolute by the cab door.

"I should think that Miss Leighton was the mistress of her own actions," rejoined Rolf impatiently, from his seat on the kerbstone, where he had replaced Mona in supporting the child. "But there is no time for arguing. Miss Leighton, if you are coming, will you kindly step into the cab, and we will put the child in at once?"

Mona got in, and seated herself. The Count coolly followed her, sat down by her side, slammed the door, and called out "Kensington Road." The cabby, highly enjoying the fun, drove off at full speed, followed by a laugh from the spectators.

"What do you mean by treating me so?" demanded the girl indignantly.

"Merely to prevent your being made ridiculous by a person who—to say no worse of him—is a quixotic idiot."

"I think it is you who have made me ridiculous by treating me like a child before a crowd of people."

"That was the result of your being among the crowd of people, where you ought not to have been, and where your presence was due to Mr. Rolf Rolleston. He is a most unfit acquaintance for you, and if your aunt takes my advice, she will forbid him to visit at your house."

"Oh, don't say anything to her about it," cried Mona, frightened out of her anger; "she will be vexed, I know, and I cannot bear to be scolded."

"Then do you wish me to keep your secret?"

"Yes, please."

"You can depend on me. You know I always keep your secrets." Mona winced. "Or, I would rather say, *our* secrets. But there is one sweet little secret of ours that I don't intend to keep always."

She made no answer, and the Count allowed her to remain silent until the cab stopped at her door.

Mona Leighton had the good or bad fortune to be the absolute mistress of five thousand a year; but never did anyone get less advantage out of wealth. She was one of the creatures who are born to be put upon, and put upon accordingly she was, as much by her servants as by her relatives. She bore the traces of her destiny in a meek and subdued manner, delicate cheeks that flushed readily, and

soft blue eyes that easily filled with tears. For I have known many people who were tyrannised over, but never one that liked it; though their tyrants always held the same theory with regard to them as the cook concerning the eels, and were certain that they would be miserable if they were given their own way.

Mona used to have her own way once, when her father was alive, and she was the pet and queen of an adoring household. Then she had had her pretty little wilfulnesses, and her soft bursts of fun, and even tiny spurts of mischief. But a time had come of darkness and confused misery, when all her little world of love and sunshine crumbled into dust, and was carried away in her father's coffin. Her uncle came as her guardian, and he and his family took possession of her home, and made it theirs, and changed everything. Since then, she had been well brought up, with good governesses, good masters, and "every advantage," except the advantage of a little love. Her aunt considered that it would be ruinous to allow her to be treated as an heiress, and get ideas of independence into her head—and, indeed, it was singularly easy to keep them out of it. So her twenty-first birthday had made no difference to her, except that she had to sign papers which she did not understand, and had an increase in her liberal allowance of pocket-money; and she lived in her own house, in a state of absolute subjection, afraid of everyone who said a cross word to her, and pathetically grateful to whomsoever said a kind one.

It is not difficult to find chivalrous males ready to say a kind word to an heiress who is also (legally) her own mistress; but Mrs. Leighton was the most vigilant of duennas, having every possible motive for prolonging her niece's maidenhood. She could not expect to live for ever, with her family, rent-free, in Mona's house, for the sake of affording her society and protection—nominally sharing expenses, the bills of which no one but herself ever saw; but she would make it last as long as she could. Therefore Mona was allowed to make as few acquaintances, and go into as little society, as possible; and it was very rarely that Rolf Rolleston could say a few words to her with any sense of freedom. But when such a chance came, Mona's eye brightened and her courage rose; she felt strength and self-respect flow into her being from the contact with the strong protection and reverent tenderness of the only person who neither snubbed her nor tyrannised over her.

Rolf had a way of taking other people on his shoulders, and carrying them. Needless to say that he was always well provided with objects on which to expend his energy; but he was no fool, and generally preferred finding them for himself to taking them on their own recommendation. He went through the world with the curious conviction that strength of every kind was meant to supplement weakness of every kind; and so his own long purse, and clever head, and scientific fists, and certain stronger and stranger powers which he neither cared to talk about nor exhibit, were always ready for the

service of anyone who needed them—and they were very particularly ready for Mona's. In spite of Mrs. Leighton, matters might have found their way to a happy ending before now, but for some additional shadow that had fallen on Mona's life, exaggerated her timidity into a piteous nervousness, and taught her to shrink away from Rolf Rolleston, as if guilty and unworthy, until this day, when a common pity for the suffering child had brought them closer together than ever before. Then it had lifted for a moment, only to darken down more heavily again.

Was it the shadow of Count Viaveda? He had made Mr. Leighton's acquaintance some months ago, and had been introduced by him to his family and his niece. He was a man of nondescript nationality, and no one in Mr. Leighton's circle knew anything of his history; but his tailoring was irreproachable; his manners were of that class which would awe the boldest of London landladies out of asking for a reference, and he had a way of imposing himself upon people at his own valuation. He called tolerably frequently at the house in Kensington Road, but he met Mona outside it much more often than her aunt had any idea of; and every meeting left her more dejected and miserable.

Rolf, left sitting on the kerbstone with a dirty, screaming child in his arms, was not particularly happy either; but the cat in gloves catches no mice, and practical philanthropy costs much soap. A charitable bystander came to his assistance, and the patient was safely conveyed to the nearest hospital. On his homeward walk, Rolf had time to think things over.

"I never saw her so sweet as to-day," he meditated; "so tender, and brave and helpful. I always believed it was in her, but now I know it. And then to see that insolent fellow walk off with her in her aunt's name, as if he were her uncle-in-law! or her husband, which is what he wants to be, and which he shall never be, if I can stop it. He wants her and her five thousand a year, and he means to have them, by fair means or foul—chiefly foul. I can see a glimpse of what's going on. The scoundrel is trying to get her into his power; I'm not sure that he hasn't done it already—she seems so afraid of him. Poor little innocent darling! to have that spider weaving his meshes round her! And what can I do? I could use the same power to draw her to me that he does to draw her to him, but I never will—never! She shall give me her love freely, or not at all. It's one blessing that I've got money enough of my own not to be suspected of hunting after hers. Not that I care if I were lied about—all that I care for is to save her, and I will, too. If I only knew how to do it without making her a slave to myself!"

Meditations of this sort are capable of going on for an indefinite length of time, and auditors are likely to grow weary of a lover's cogitations on his lady and his rival long before he himself tired of the subject. But in truth it was a knotty point. How was he to defeat

Count Viaveda without knowing what he was doing, and to win Mona's love without exposing her to any mental pressure from his intense desire, so ready—with his peculiar powers—to transform itself into a constraining will?

Scene II.

"Mona, how exceedingly silly you are! You can't mean to tell me that you have left your Christmas shopping until now!"

"I am afraid I have, aunt. There has been something every day this week, and I have been waiting to get the brougham, and somebody to go with me."

"So now you will take out the carriage and horse on Christmas Eve, in the afternoon, when you know quite well that Watkins has a tea-party for his children this evening. I must say that it is most inconsiderate of you."

"I am not going to take it out, aunt; Watkins did not seem to like the idea. I can take a cab."

"Alone! At this hour of the day?"

"I thought, perhaps, one of the girls would come with me."

Mona glanced at two young ladies who were toasting their toes at opposite sides of the low fender, with an air of comfort most discouraging to her hopes. One of them looked up from her crewel-work, and remarked:

"If you are going to Oxford Street, you may as well match this green for me, and get two skeins. I shall have used all mine before the shops are open again."

"Oh, certainly," answered Mona; "but should you very much mind coming with me? I don't like being out alone; the shops will be full, and I get so confused in a crowd; and the shop people will be in a hurry, and they will make me buy things I don't want."

"That's your own fault for not having done your shopping in proper time, and I am not going to encourage you in being silly. Don't let yourself be bullied—that is all about it."

"Could you come, Anna?" she asked, turning to her other cousin. "We could have our tea somewhere out, and it would be better fun seeing all the people at their shopping, if one were not alone."

"It's a kind of fun that doesn't attract me, thank you," answered Anna, scarcely looking up from her work. "If you're going, you'd better go, or you won't be back before dark."

Mona turned away with a sigh, and was soon shut into her four-wheeled cab alone. Once there, some nervous misery seemed to take possession of her. She moved from side to side, peered out at the window, and then crouched back in the corner, restlessly fidgeting with her muff-bag, or pulling the long hairs out of the fur border of her jacket, talking to herself all the time in little gasps.

"Oh, I hope I shan't do it again; but I won't, I won't. Surely I

can help it if I try very hard, and keep my hands in my muff. If Anna would only have come with me! And perhaps I shall see him! There, I do believe that is his back! No, it isn't. Oh, I am so frightened. I hope—I hope—I shan't see him, with nobody to take care of me. But he always comes when I am alone; I do believe he knows, somehow. Oh, I can't take care of myself, I can't, I can't; and I have nobody to take care of me. Oh, how miserable I am! Oh, papa, papa, won't they let you help me?" And she sobbed helplessly in the corner of the cab.

The stopping of the vehicle forced her into a hurried composure; she alighted at the shop where she meant to get the wool, and dismissed the driver. Conscious of red eyes, she bolted into the shop like a frightened rabbit, when she saw Rolf Rolleston coming up the street, and plunged into a mass of blue greens, olive greens, myrtle greens, gas greens—every green in nature and art except the particular green which Amy wanted.

Rolf had seen her too, and known that she saw him, and had avoided him. He was not surprised. He felt sure that she was not entirely free, though he did not know how she was bound; and the very insulting fashion in which she had been carried off when they had last met might well create an awkwardness in meeting again.

"I won't worry her, poor little thing," he thought; "but I won't lose sight of her. The streets are crowded, and she oughtn't to be out by herself. Besides, Viaveda may turn up, and take advantage of the chance to do some mischief. I'll be even with him, if he does."

Rolf lit a cigar, and lounged about at a discreet distance from the door, until Mona emerged, rather triumphant from a successful struggle, and carrying in her bag two skeins of the exact shade required. She went on towards Oxford Circus, walking quickly, and throwing little furtive glances into the shops she passed, and into the vehicles that she met, as if to see if some face—dreaded or desired—were or were not waiting there. Rolf walked after her, unseen, at a short distance, but keeping well in sight of the white feathered hat over the long fur jacket. So she went on, protected, but ignorant of her protector, who allowed the policeman at the Circus to pilot her over those terrible crossings, until she entered Regent Street.

Then Rolf suddenly became aware that his was not the only eye that watched her, nor his the only feet that followed her. Someone was walking close behind, whose neighbourhood was oppressive to him, and whose step was restrained to the same slow time set by the short, girlish steps in front. Rolf felt annoyed, and turned to look into a shop window and let the owner of the steps pass him. A sort of electric shock of anger went through him when he recognised Count Viaveda. "Following her, is he?" he thought. "Well, I'll follow him, and we'll see what mischief he's up to."

The coolest of salutations was exchanged between the two men,

and Rolf continued his study of articles recommended for Christmas presents until the Count had passed on. Then he resumed his way, keeping Viaveda's tall hat well in sight, with occasional glimpses of the white beaver in front.

Mona felt rather proud and successful, and the clouds under which her expedition had begun were clearing off. She had not much overpaid her cabman, she had displayed courage and resolution over her wool, and nothing unpleasant had happened in that shop; now she was near her next destination—Liberty's—and she had seen nothing of *him*. She might have rather a pleasant afternoon after all, and her thoughts were busy upon the necklaces of foreign beads which were to be her Christmas presents to her cousins. Should she choose one turquoise and the other amber, or should they both be of some neutral colour which would go well with any dress?

A step that stopped by her, a touch on her arm, a face above her, and a sudden feeling of cold and giddiness. Count Viaveda! The fingers that rested lightly on her warm sealskin seemed to lay a cold clutch upon her heart; it stood still, and so did Mona.

"Oh," she gasped; "Count Viaveda; I—I didn't expect to see you."

"Did you not?" he asked, looking at her steadily. "Are you sure that you did not? Sure that you were not expecting me as you walked along? Sure that you did not feel me coming?"

"I did half think," she faltered, "that I might meet you. But I am nearly ready to go home now; so—so ——"

"So you had given me up? Well, it was unkind of me to leave the pretty little white bird so long alone; but I will make up for it by taking care of her now that I have come."

"Oh, indeed you needn't mind," she protested. "I have been out a good while; I think I will go home, if you will just call a cab. Please do; here is one."

"You were not going home when I came up," he replied coolly; "you were going to shop. Where were you going? Here?"

"Yes, but I would rather not, now. I am afraid—oh, you know what I am afraid of."

"You were not afraid of it when you were by yourself, and I see no reason why you should be so sensitive now. Come in and do your shopping; I will not let anyone interfere with you. Let us have no folly."

Mona went into the shop, looking depressed and miserable, followed by her self-constituted escort. Rolf had seen the meeting, though he did not hear what passed; but he did not know exactly how to interfere, and besides, there was nothing to interfere about. Nevertheless, his persistent misgiving drew him in after the pair, but inside he could see nothing of them. There was a crowd of people buying and looking at things; there were staircases in different directions, and small rooms on one side and the other, oriental

draperies veiling every doorway, a vague scent, a glow of light. Coming in suddenly out of the winter twilight, he was confused for a moment, and did not see the white hat disappearing behind a curtain. He went up one of the staircases instead, and wandered round, finding no one to interfere with him, through the innumerable little rooms full of fanciful prettinesses, now and then looking at something that took his fancy, and always looking for Mona. The process was rather a long one, and after some time he reached a tiny sanctum, the innermost of two or three, where some Japanese bronzes attracted his attention. He knew something about the matter, and inspected the quaint things with all the affectionateness of a dilettante, for the moment forgetting his quixotic errand, and never noticing that as he came in, the handle of his umbrella had caught the loosely-fastened drapery, and pulled away the cord which looped it up, so that he was shut in from sight. It mattered not to him; he was happy with his lamps and vases.

Mona, downstairs, was turning over her beads with a nervous and dejected air. All her pleasure was gone; and if strings of pearl and red glass had been among the collection, Amy's chances of getting either would have been equal. Count Viaveda had to choose for her; the necklaces were bought, and Mona was counting out the exact money, when he interposed, and put down a five-pound note.

"Allow me; I want some change; we can settle afterwards."

The fancifully-hooded maiden who presided over the beads went off for the change, and the two were left alone. Mona sat with drooped head; Count Viaveda looked at her intently. Then he laid his hand lightly on her neck, as a lover might take the privilege of arranging her kerchief; she shivered slightly, but sat still. In a minute, or less, she put out her hand, without looking, took one of the strings of beads, and dropped it into her bag. He removed his hand, and she sprang to her feet.

"Oh, I've done it again! Did you see?"

"I saw."

"Oh, what shall I do? I've time to put it back, though—there's no one here."

"You have no time; the girl is coming now. Go upstairs at once, and I will follow you. I will shuffle them up, and she will not notice."

Mona fled upstairs; but instead of executing any manœuvres, the Count merely remarked that the young lady had taken another necklace, and paid for the three. Then he followed his victim, smiling quietly. He found her staring hard at a china cup, in one of the inner rooms; some people were there also, and the purchase of an addition to the array of useless articles that cumbered Mrs. Leighton's toilet-table was effected without incident. When it was over, they found themselves alone together again.

"I've done now," said Mona; "I should like to go home."

"Let us look at some more of these pretty things first," suggested her companion. "I want something in this line myself."

"No," she answered, desperately; "I won't stay. If I do, I shall take something else. I feel it coming on now. Oh, don't look at me so! It makes me worse." She put her hands before her eyes.

"Mona," he retorted, "take your hands down, and don't behave like a child. You have an unfortunate habit, which in some people would be called shop-lifting; in a young lady of your wealth and position we will call it kleptomania. It is very sad, but I am the only person who knows it, and I do my best to protect you from yourself. I have always managed so that you should not be found out."

The unhappy girl fairly writhed with shame.

"Oh! to think that there should be anything to find out about me! Anything that all the world might not know!"

"Unfortunately there is, you see. But when you are with me, you are safe. I never let anything unpleasant happen to you; I even let you keep the pretty things that you have such a fancy for."

"I hate them," she cried. "I don't want them; I don't know what makes me take them. There they are; I never want to see them again." And she threw the stolen beads upon the floor.

"You had better pick them up," remarked the Count. "Someone might come in, and ask awkward questions. And I don't like scenes. My little Mona must never make scenes for me when she is my wife."

"Oh, I am not going to be your wife," she gasped. "I don't want to be married."

"I think you do, though perhaps you do not know it; you are such an innocent child, you see. I think you want to be quite sure that you will never be exposed before your friends and all the world, never taken into a police court for stealing. I think you don't want to have it published in all the newspapers that on such and such a day, a young lady, of prepossessing appearance, was brought before the magistrate, charged with shop-lifting, and that her name proved to be Mona Leighton."

Mona had grown whiter and whiter; she looked round helplessly, and sank upon a seat.

"You would not like it," continued the Count. "And there is only one way to make quite sure that it will never happen. It is to give the one man who has your secret the best possible reason for keeping it. When your honour is in your husband's hands, Mona, it will be safe."

"You promised," she murmured.

"Yes, but the condition was well understood. And if I promised, did not you? I have a note here in my pocket-book" (tapping his breast)—"a sweet little note, though it is very short—in which Mona

Leighton promises to marry Philip Viaveda within six months from the date. Very short, but quite long enough to be good evidence in an action for breach of promise."

"You made me write it. I didn't want to."

"You were in your senses, a woman of full age; you knew what you were doing. Now it is time to make arrangements for our marriage; three months have elapsed since our betrothal, and I wish our engagement to be made public. Christmas Eve is a good time for joyful family events; I shall escort you home this evening, have an interview with your respected uncle, and spend Christmas in the bosom of your family in a truly domestic and quite Arcadian fashion." He twisted his moustache, and looked down upon the girl with a sardonic smile. She felt as if walls were closing in upon her.

"Oh, must I?" she whispered, twisting her fingers miserably.

"Certainly you must. You must be happy, you must be safe. You are not able to take care of yourself; you know that."

"Yes, I know it," she cried—her voice smothered by the consciousness of strangers possibly within hearing, and yet sharp with pain. "I am not able to take care of myself, and I have no one to take care of me. Oh, no one!"

She looked about her despairingly; her stifled, pathetic cries for help were like the bleatings of a lamb, swept downward by the powerful stream, and dimly conscious of the rapids ahead.

"You have me," said the Count, tenderly.

"You!" she exclaimed, turning on him with the courage of despair. "You have done it all; I don't know how, but I know that I am never bad except when I am with you. I never took things till you came, and looked at me so; I never do it when you are not here. It is not I that do it; it is you, somehow. You are bad—I know that you are bad; and I won't marry you—I would rather go to prison!"

"*Would* you?" he asked deliberately, placing a finger on her forehead, and looking steadily into her eyes.

"Yes, I would—I don't know—oh, you are looking at me again! No, I would not; I will marry you, if you wish."

Count Viaveda dropped his hand, but it was not only because he had attained his object; it was because he could not hold it up any longer. He turned rather white, and a sort of shiver went over him. Mona did not notice him; she felt released, and sat in a dazed relief which was only half-conscious. He glanced at her again and again, and moved about uneasily, walked to one end of the room and then the other—a matter of about four steps. He turned paler still; large drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and sometimes he staggered a little. He made for the door, then stopped short, and came back, like an animal checked by its tether. His uneasy movements aroused Mona at last; she looked up, in time to see him sidle up to the shelves, take up a pretty little jewelled bronze as if to

look at it, and then slip it into the large outside pocket on the left side of his fur-trimmed overcoat.

She gave a smothered exclamation.

"Hold your tongue," said the Count fiercely, turning sharply on her.

A curtain which seemed to cover the wall between two cases was lifted, and Rolf Rolleston quietly stepped in. He bowed to Mona, but kept his eyes fixed on Count Viaveda. It was as if he had been looking at him for a long time.

"The accidental circumstance," he said slowly, "of that entrance-curtain having fallen, without having been perceived by me or by you, has rendered me privy to what has been passing in this room. Allow me first to assure you, Miss Leighton, on the honour of a gentleman, that every word which I have heard is safe with me."

"On the honour of a listener," sneered the Count.

"When I have to fight the devil," returned Rolf coolly, "I am not particular as to my weapons, so long as they are effective. I did not mention honour to *you*."

"Come away, Mona," said the Count. "I will settle with this snob when you are not here."

"You will have to settle now," observed the other. "I want to see what you have got in the pocket of that big coat of yours."

"So you shall." Count Viaveda's right hand dropped into his pocket, with intention.

"No, you don't," flashed Rolf, springing forwards. His left hand gripped the Count's wrist, held it as if in a vice, and wrenched it out of the pocket, helplessly holding a revolver, which his right as promptly confiscated.

"That was rather neatly done, I flatter myself,' he remarked. "You had better not try any more of those Yankee games with me—I don't like them."

"Give me back my pistol, you thief," cried the Count, making an ineffectual snatch at it. He was foaming with rage.

"Certainly. But you must wait a minute. Be quiet." Rolf lightly laid a finger on Viaveda, as Viaveda had done on Mona before; and the man stood still, cowering and trembling. He deliberately proceeded to draw the six cartridges, one after the other, and then offered the whole to their owner.

"There is your revolver, and there are your cartridges. They are safer apart. Put them into your right-hand pocket. Now, empty your other. Fool! obey me at once, and don't stare."

With his eyes fixed on Rolf's, the Count fumbled in his left-hand pocket, brought up the bronze just into sight, and dropped it back. He looked as helpless and miserable as Mona had done a few minutes before. She had sprung to her feet now, and stood, half-terrified and half-fascinated, watching the struggle. Rolf made a quick movement with his hand; and the expression of the Count's face changed.

"There!" he said; "we are man to man again. I have only used my power to punish you as you deserved for the way in which you have used yours. It would have afforded me infinitely more gratification to knock you down, you scoundrel, but for Miss Leighton's presence."

"Oh, go on," said the Count viciously; "don't mind *her*."

"I do mind her so much," replied Rolf, "that I mean to make it impossible for her ever again to be imposed upon or threatened by you. I think, Miss Leighton, you now understand that this swindler—for purposes of his own—has used his mesmeric power to compel you to acts for which you were no more responsible that a baby. You have now seen him do with his own hands what he formerly did by yours. Under these circumstances, it is, perhaps, not impertinent if I ask you whether you wish the engagement into which I understand he has forced you to continue?"

"Oh, no," she answered. "I never wished to be engaged to him. I can't bear him."

"Then would you like to have that note returned to you?"

"Oh, very much."

"I shall not return it," said the Count doggedly.

"I wonder that you are so foolish as to commit yourself to such a statement in my presence," remarked Rolf. "Miss Leighton, please to demand your note."

"Give it back to me, please," said Mona, holding out her hand.

"Give it back to her," Rolf repeated; "or the simple alternative is that I give you in charge for theft. Miss Leighton saw you take that little article in your pocket, and I have seen it in your possession. A pretty story it will be for the society papers! Quite as good as the young lady of prepossessing appearance."

"There's the thing, then," growled the Count, throwing the note on the floor. "And there's your trumpery," throwing the bronze after it. "And there's your fool," pointing to Mona; "and much good may you get of her and her money! And there's your bully," pointing to Rolf, "who listens behind doors, and trades on what he hears; and a nice protection he is for you! I'll have no more to do with you, except to expose you both in all decent society!" And he flung himself out of the room, with a more than muttered oath.

"Is he really gone?" breathed Mona.

"Gone! For ever. He will never trouble you again. You do not need any protection against him now, except the knowledge of what he is."

"Then you don't think, when he meets me next, he will begin all over again?"

"Certainly not. He knows that he is defeated, and he will not fight any more. And if he does, I will kill him."

Rolf spoke in a matter-of-fact sort of way, as if Viaveda had been vermin, and, indeed, he thought of him as such. Mona looked up

with the mysterious thrill of delight and pride which women who could not kill a fly feel in the homicidal feats of their masters.

"You don't mean that?"

"I do. Was he not doing worse than killing you?"

"Oh, much worse," Mona shuddered. "Now I must go home. It is very late."

"I will see you home, if you will allow me."

They left the queer little room which had been the theatre of so strange a scene, and passed out into the street.

"How fortunate it was," Mona remarked, "that it all happened in such an out-of-the-way corner, and that nobody came in! And how fortunate that you were in the next room!"

"And how fortunate that my umbrella pulled down the curtain, so that you did not see me! In fact, there was a series of pieces of good fortune, beginning with my happening to come up just as you were getting out of your cab."

"Why, did you see me?"

"Yes, and I saw that you did not want to see me. So I did not trouble you, but was just at hand in case I should be wanted."

"Then you were taking care of me all the time, when I did not know it?"

"Trying to."

"It was very good of you. I don't think anyone takes care of me much; that was how I got into such terrible trouble."

"May I take care of you?"

"I don't think you have waited for leave," said Mona, smiling up at him shyly under her hat.

"Yes; but always?"

"Always! Oh, will you?"

"Will I?" said Rolf, fervently. "Will I not? With all my heart and all my strength!"

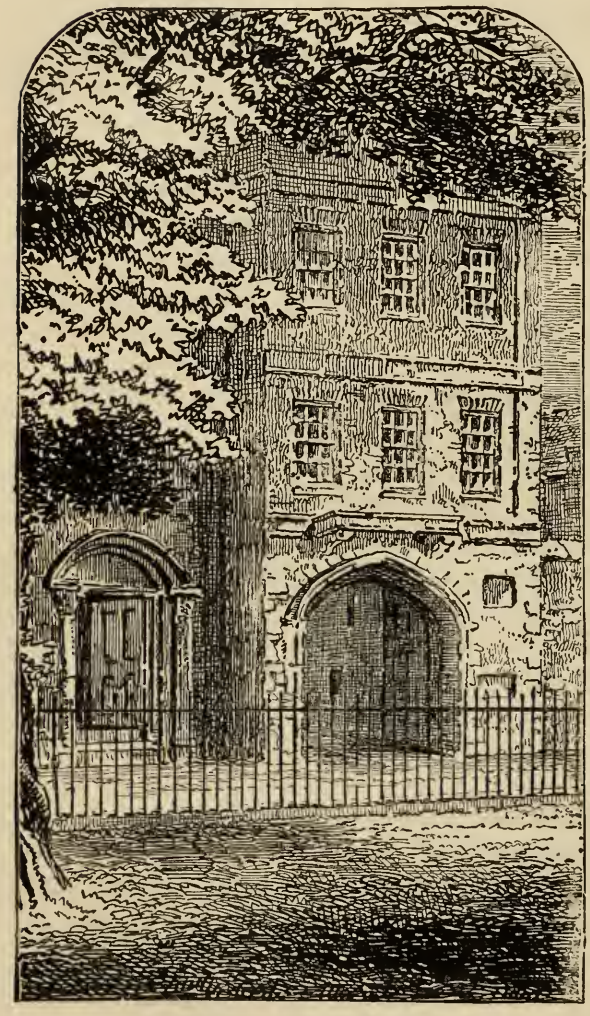
"That will be very good," sighed Mona, softly.

Regent Street is scarcely the place for demonstrations, and all that Rolf could do was to extract her little hand from her muff, and tuck it inside his arm, where it received and conveyed a great deal of intelligence.

The evening had darkened down, and grey flakes of snow were drifting down across the yellow sky; but what were darkness or cold to them? There is a portable paradise which encircles just ourselves and one other, if we are lucky enough to find the key—and which is independent of place, or time, or weather. Rolf and Mona had long been disconsolately wandering round its walls, but they found the key that Christmas eve in Regent Street.

IN QUIET WAYS.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Under Northern Skies," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



Charterhouse in 1804.

THERE are many wonderful nooks and corners in the quiet paths of the world, unknown to the great crowd of people who pass up and down the broad outlines of its highways. And these nooks and corners are often so near these highways that a few minutes' divergence to right or left would disclose them in all their charm and beauty.

But the crowd hurries onward, each with his particular end and aim in view. The goal to be attained may be wealth, fame, a comfortable old age, or the general reformation and regeneration of the human race. It all comes to the same. No one pauses to inquire if there are things about him worth seeking out; resting places by the wayside where he may gain breathing time; refresh his spirit by a moment's withdrawal from the common-place influences of everyday life; inhale a little of the calm, old-world atmosphere of the sleeping ages; of ancient buildings and classic sites that are ever full of peace and repose; where, it may be, human footsteps seldom echo, and song and laughter are never heard; where the rooks—those wise birds—build and chatter and hold their parliaments in tall elms grown great if not grey with age: forming long avenues and secluded bowers that were once frequented by the famous and the good.

Even in this London of ours, this rushing mighty world, there are such spots. Places where you may withdraw from the noise and roar, the bustle and battle of the great city, with all its distracting elements; and be as retired and lost as though suddenly transplanted by the magic of Aladdin's Lamp or the Wonderful Carpet to some far off sleepy cathedral city.

Such a spot is Old Charterhouse. Multitudes do not even know of its existence; and amongst those who do know, how few visit it. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, daily look upon its gates, and have never paused to enter and gaze upon this remnant of the past.

Yet how much is there about it that is beautiful; how it carries your spirit back to days that are gone for ever, over which centuries have rolled; days when England as yet knew nothing of the reformation; and Henry VIII. had not defied the Pope and laid the foundation for the downfall of Rome in England; and Elizabeth had not arisen to set the world by the ears with her strength and her weakness, her airs, graces and caprices; to make herself loved, feared and served as few sovereigns had ever been since the days of Cleopatra and the Queen of Sheba.

Days when men renounced the world, and cloistered themselves, and became monks, and trod silent corridors "with cowléd head and sandall'd shoon;" devoted themselves to long prayers, to fasts and vigils, penances and lacerations of the flesh; the gloom and solitude of the cell; making life what it was never meant to be; losing sight of a certain passage of Scripture which says "*I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*"

There is no more crowded neighbourhood in London than that which surrounds the Charterhouse. But it is not the race for wealth that is altogether apparent here. In too many cases it is the bare struggle for existence; the toiling for daily bread; the living "from hand to mouth," which is the lot of the poor, and makes them so improvident, because they think they have "nothing worth saving." They cannot realise the importance of small beginnings, and that, like ill-weeds, these grow apace.

The whole neighbourhood is historical. What pictures of bygone days does not the very word Smithfield conjure up to the imagination; what scenes has it not witnessed, what vicissitudes gone through. It is true that many a gabled house and quaint court has disappeared, and an aggressive, if not hideous, meat market has taken the place of many an ancient landmark; and as you pass this market, and sights, sounds and odours almost stop the beating of your heart, and take your breath away, you hurry on, and wish that you were able to follow Wolsey's example, and hold a sponge to your nose dipped in aromatic waters.

But there is yet much that remains. You are still surrounded by historical monuments and records; and their influence is according to their destination.

Within a stone's throw, for instance, lies that great and gloomy pile which has seen the end of many an existence—Newgate: so called from its having been one of the towers of the city gates. It is blackened and grimed with age, yet are the walls not more stained than many a heart that has ceased to beat within its portals. Here many a well-known character has found his career checked and his freedom for ever lost. Jack Sheppard was confined in Newgate; Defoe, the unfortunate and unhappy Dr. Dodd, Titus Oates, William Penn, and others. Here, in 1793, died Lord George Gordon, the leader of the famous riots, who, thirteen years before, had helped to burn down old Newgate and set the prisoners free. It was in front of Newgate that Bellingham was executed in 1812 for the murder of Percival in the House of Commons; and almost opposite is the house once occupied by the notorious and lawless Jonathan Wild.

Here upon the roof the dread scaffold used to be erected, and a dense crowd outside would assemble to witness the ghastly sight of a prisoner undergoing the extreme penalty of the law. The execution takes place in private now, and when a soul is departing on its long journey, and a life is forfeited for the sin of a life taken—and those who would attempt to set the law aside should remember that it is a Divine ordinance—the black flag waves in the air, standing out, it may be, in contrast with a blue and sunny sky; a groan and a shiver goes through the crowd that still assembles without; whilst above all is heard the sad and solemn death bell of St. Sepulchre's.

What an awful moment must be that last walk to the scaffold; that small, silent procession; the central figure shrouded by the sanctity that attends the dead; the living dead, walking to his own grave, counting the strokes of his own death-bell, listening to his own burial service. Well may all pray to be kept in the hour of temptation; a Divine Wisdom upholding them that their footsteps slip not.

But if you are passing St. Sepulchre's—it is well named—on a Sunday morning, you will hear no melancholy death strokes given out at intervals, but a merry peal of great sweetness and beauty, calling people to church. The streets are so deserted, the houses so closed, that you wonder who there is to call, and whether the parson will succeed in gathering together the two or three that are necessary to a congregation. If you enter, you will find the effect somewhat striking, though you will feel how much more beautiful it might have been made. It was built as far back as the reign of Henry I. and was in the gift of the Priors of St. Bartholomew. It suffered in the great fire of 1666, and was restored by Wren. Condemned criminals attended service here, on their road to Tyburn; so that many a sad procession has entered its doors, and it is associated with much that is historically interesting. It has a beautiful porch, with some fine tracery on the roof; and just within you will find a record of the bells that are now ringing.

One tablet sets forth the following: "A.D. 1793. The Junior Society of Cumberland Youths rang in this steeple on the 10th of December, 1793, a complete set of Grandsire Caters, consisting of 5,111 changes in 3 hours and 35 minutes, by the following persons."

Then is added a list of names. We suppose that it was a remarkable performance, or it would not be chronicled, but there is a certain sadness about the record. No doubt they were all young and vigorous, those ringers, full of life and hope; many years before them to rejoice in their youth. On that 10th of December they were all happiness and laughter, careless of the morrow; believing "all men mortal but themselves." But neither for them would time stand still; the spring and summer of life passed into autumn; the full foliage changed to the yellow leaf; time rolled on, and each found that he could not escape the common lot, but was mortal indeed. For each came the "dread apocalypse" of the soul, and they trod the earth no more. And a century has passed away as a tale that is told.

One recent Sunday morning, we ourselves turned in for a moment. As we stood reading the record, the tower door was open leading to the belfry. The sound of young men's voices came echoing down the winding staircase in happiness and laughter, just as they must have echoed that 10th December, a hundred years ago. Of circumstance probably little had changed in the century. They were the same bells, the same belfry, the same surroundings, the same opposite prison walls—then nearly new; the same blue sky and laughing sunshine over all. Only the ringers had changed, and been succeeded by the third and fourth generation. With us, as in the days of the kings of Judah, Timni dies and Omri reigns.

Onward from the church, up Newgate Street, you soon reach the railings of Christ's Hospital, more familiarly known as the Blue Coat School. Passing down the narrow passage between the picturesque old buildings and the church you find yourself in Smithfield, close to the oldest, perhaps the most interesting church in London—that of St. Bartholomew the Great. It is impossible to describe it in this paper, or to dwell upon its charms, which include a blacksmith's forge under its very roof; though it is so well walled off that within the building its existence is neither seen nor suspected. The forge has been there, no one knows how long, but its existence is now doomed, and before these pages reach the reader's eye, will probably have become a matter of history and tradition.

This Smithfield is full of interest.

It is historical; has the merit of antiquity; has played its part in many a tragedy—and many a comedy also; its pavements have been trodden by saint and sinner, by monk and abbot, prior and canon; by tyrants eager for blood, and victims on their way to execution; by princes and nobles, kings and queens, including great Elizabeth herself. It is mentioned by Shakespeare, and probably many a house still standing has given him shelter; many a time he

has no doubt passed through the adjoining and interesting old gateway of St. John of Jerusalem. Its streets ran with the blood of martyrs in the days of Henry VIII. and Queen Mary; and the stake was fixed in the open space exactly opposite St. Bartholomew the Great. England was given over to Romanism and bigotry, and torture and persecution were the order of the day. What to them were the lives of heretics? what the souls of men? They gloried in taking the one, in sending the other to its great account. The church was everything, said they; and through Rome alone could Heaven be gained. But in these days, Romanists and Protestants alike have become more enlightened.

The Prior of St. Bartholomew would assist at the burning, supported by his canons, and it may be that the cries of the dying martyrs were as music to their ears. Well for us that we have fallen upon happier times, and that our faith has not to stand so sharp a test. Here Wallace and Mortimer were executed, and Wat Tyler was killed single handed by Sir William Walworthe, then Lord Mayor of London, before Richard II. and his Commons, who stood ranged in front of St. Bartholomew's the Great.

Here, too, the famous Bartholomew Fair was held once a year; the great fair of England, at a time when fairs were as much an institution with us as they still are in Russia and Germany.

Who that knows Leipsic, for instance, at the period of its great annual visitation, has not wished himself transported to one of those distant stars that nightly shine down upon the wonderful gathering? I remember once reaching the old town when it was in full operation; I knew nothing about it, had not announced my arrival or secured rooms. Every hotel, every house was crowded, people seemed packed like herrings in a barrel; and at length I was thankful to make the best of a small, though clean, garret, in the roof of a very tall house.

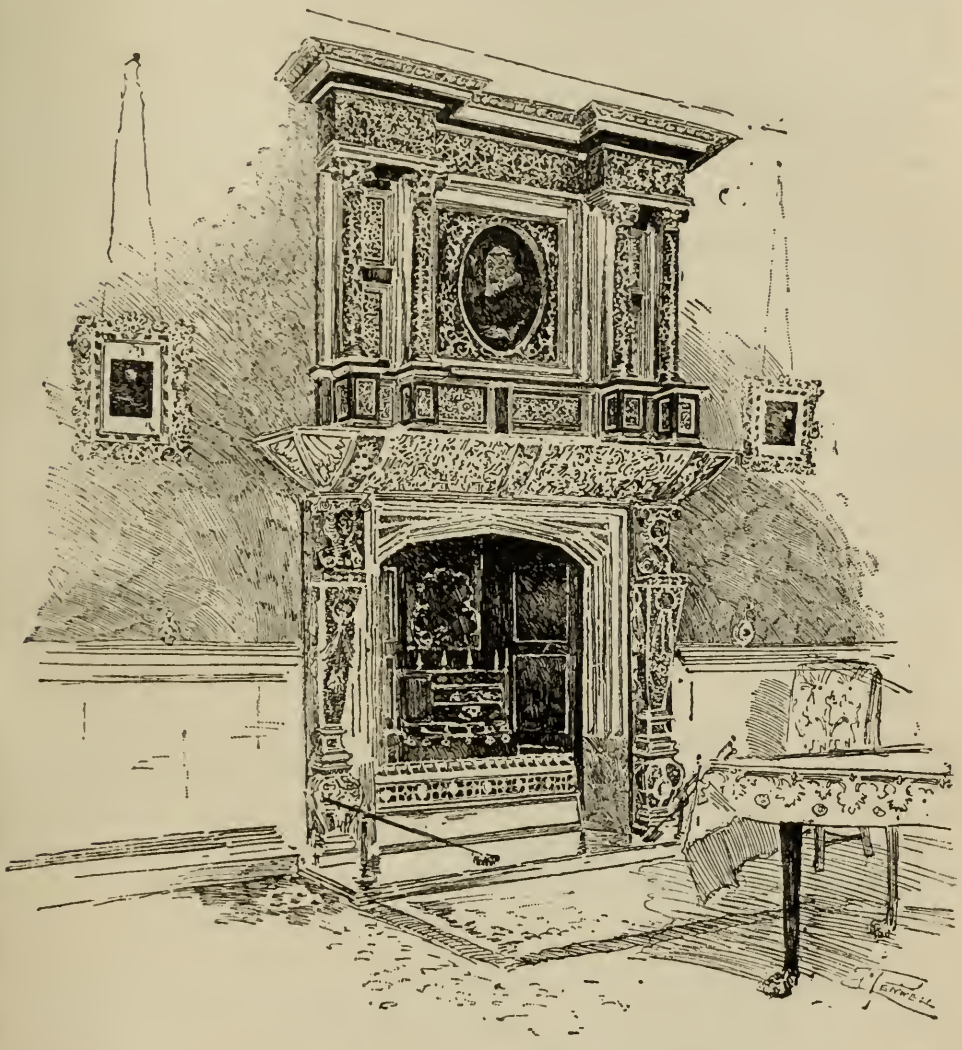
Here a well-known baron came to visit me, and the landlady, overcome by so much majesty, so great an honour, walked backwards up the one hundred and forty-four stairs that led to my observatory, and threw wide the door.

"Herr Baron ——" she began, and there ceased.

Her voice had failed her. She fancied herself in the presence of royalty, and her mind had temporarily collapsed. But the attention, the homage, that I received after this from the good frau for the two days I lived above the world can never be recorded. It was overwhelming, and compelled me, whether or no, to a dignity of manner and stiffness of bearing suited to the royal atmosphere with which the Baron's call had surrounded me. The slightest approach to unbending was met with a profound curtsey, which was a sort of rebuke, and quickly restored me to the uncomfortable stilts of ceremony. Like the moon, I shone by a reflected light.

Bartholomew Fair, in the ancient days, must have been after the

same sort; only that my modest garret would probably then have been considered an elegant apartment. The fair, like that of Leipsic, was very much for the sale of cloth, and was established by a grant given by Henry II. to the Black Canons of St. Bartholomew. It was finally abolished as recently as 1855, but for the last hundred years had existed more as a gathering for dissipation than anything else.



In the Master's Lodge.

The narrow turning next to St. Bartholomew's church is still called Cloth Fair, and the very name carries you back to the past centuries. Many of the houses are old and crumbling, almost ready to fall; and might have been there in the days of the flood. Men are lounging about, their hands in their pockets, idling; and women, unkempt, unfeminine, horrify you by their loud tones and abandoned attitudes.

If the court were deserted, you think it would look much more picturesque.

Here you obtain a fine and most interesting view of the north side

of the church; the surrounding buildings looking, it must be confessed, old and dirty and not very respectable, as far removed as possible from the "odour of sanctity." But it is all wonderfully picturesque; you will scarcely find anything so striking anywhere else in London. Just below is the celebrated blacksmith's forge, under the very roof of the church. The sound of his anvil rings out merrily, and a patient white horse is waiting to be shod, all unconscious that he is guilty of desecration; that the very acts and deeds of Oliver Cromwell and his followers are in our midst; that history unconsciously repeats itself, and there is nothing new under the sun.

Passing down this Cloth Fair, feeling yourself the while on classic ground, you reach the bottom of the court, and turning to the left, come out upon broad new thoroughfares, where all that is old and beautiful has disappeared.

To your left is a public house with the curious sign of the Old Red Cow; though whether the sign is a remnant of antiquity, and a young red cow once stood there for the refreshment of the public —as they still do in the north east of St. James's Park—history has not recorded. A little way beyond, you catch sight again of the aggressive new market, which cost half a million of money and ruined so many of the traditions of Smithfield. But you cross the road, and going through another short and narrow passage, find yourself once more in the atmosphere of history and tradition.

You are in Charterhouse Square, and though it is very different now from what it was in ancient days, when the trees were planted in long rows that crossed each other like the letter X, it is still interesting.

You find it a strange mixture of new and old, for everything must give way to progress, the necessities of trade and commerce, the race for wealth. High, modern warehouses, large and loud and bustling, look out upon the green in front; but on the opposite side repose the ancient and picturesque buildings of Old Charterhouse.

These, fortunately, have not yet given way to "progress." They seem almost to enter a protest against the modern buildings that confront them and form so incongruous an element in the old square; and, as far as buildings can speak, they certainly cry aloud to be spared from further desecration. Some time ago it was proposed to demolish them and divert the charity; an act of barbarism and wickedness that ought to have brought down a judgment upon those who perpetrated it, had it been accomplished. But the danger seems to have passed: and though it is certain to arise again, let us hope that old Charterhouse will never be doomed to destruction.

For once within its precincts you are in a new world, and feel that you have suddenly been taken back to the middle ages.

Its history dates from very early times. The word Charterhouse, itself, is a corruption of the French word Chartreuse. It first existed as a Priory of Carthusian Monks, and was founded in the year 1371

by Sir Walter de Manny, who was a Knight of the Garter in the reign of Edward III., and who had come over from Flanders.

Some three hundred years before this, the Order of Carthusians, or Chartreux, had been founded by St. Bruno, in the Dauphiné Alps, not very far from Grenoble. He himself was more a hermit than a monk; more a St. Jerome studying the mysteries of life and death in a solitary cave, than the head of a monastery. But he founded the order; and though in his day his following was not numerous, still he was the prior of a small and devoted band. In due time he died and was buried near his little chapel, perched on the side of a rocky prominence of the mountain, not far from a running stream in which, no doubt, he had caught many a fish for his dinner. For the monks have always been great fishermen.

His order was destined to grow and flourish. It spread over the face of the Catholic world. Many monasteries were founded almost in every land. The very rigour of its rules seemed to only attract its votaries, who, spurred by the spirit of fanaticism and superstition that characterised the middle ages, withdrew to these cloisters to escape the temptations of the outer world.

Those who have visited the chief monastery of the Order in the Dauphiné will hardly wonder that so many have been persuaded to withdraw to so lovely a retreat. Here, indeed, may peace be gained by those who have found life too much for them, with its triple temptation of the World, the Flesh and the Devil. The journey into the mountains is beautiful beyond the art of pen to describe. Summer and winter alike have their charms. In the warm long days, the waving, whispering trees are full of an abundant verdure; wild flowers innumerable gem the banks, the hillsides, the very path you tread. The mountains tower, and seem to reach the heavens. A blue, ethereal sky, a glowing sunshine make you feel as if here indeed were almost heaven itself. The birds around you pour out a wild, full, tumultuous song, as if they felt all the charm and seclusion of this happy paradise; and the stream runs and ripples and gleams and dances over its rocky bed.

In the colder season, all this life has disappeared; the trees are bare and no longer whisper and rustle. The wind sighs through the branches, but it is a requiem. The birds are silent; they, too, have departed. The stream no longer flows: like the birds, its music is hushed. Intense cold prevails. The mountains, on all sides, far as the eye can reach, are covered with snow; the whole earth is clothed with a white mantle, a shroud. It is wonderfully beautiful, but it is sad. The silence appalls you. If you sleep in the monastery, not a sound will disturb you, except the dull *thud, thud* of the snow, as it falls at regular intervals from the slanting roof of your cell into a courtyard or quadrangle below. Well may the monks muse on death; well may they walk the corridors with hushed footsteps and eyes lowered, their faces pale and their expression mournful.

WASH-HOUSE COURT

EXTERIOR OF WASH-HOUSE COURT.

Yet from this monastery goes forth to the world a distillation that has long cheered the heart of man ; the most intoxicating and the most delicious of its kind. The monks discovered the secret of making it, and very wisely kept it to themselves ; for it was a resource to fall back upon when their rich revenues were confiscated; and it has since kept the wolf from the door. But the expression is figurative ; for if hungry wolves bodily haunted their neighbourhood, no amount of liqueur would stop their entrance if they found open doors ; and in the other sense of the saying, the wolf must only too often attack the good monks, since fasting and penance are the stern rules of the Order.

This Charterhouse then, in Smithfield, was one of the monasteries that grew out of St. Bruno's early foundation. The saint was long dead, but the good he did—as far as there can be good in these narrow and restricted institutions—lived after him.

Sir Walter de Manny was a Flemish knight flourishing at the English Court. He bought thirteen acres of ground, known as the Spittle Croft, for the purpose of forming a cemetery. This curious word Spittle, by the way, is merely a corruption of the word Hospital : and what is now known as Spital Square would be more intelligent to ordinary folk if it were called Hospital Square, its true rendering. So, in like manner, the Spital weavers one reads about—the art is not dead, and some are still found to prosecute it—might be known as Hospital weavers : though, being men in rude health, the term might be considered misapplied.

The land bought by Sir Walter de Manny was next to a piece of ground once known as "No Man's Land." It had been bought by the Bishop of London for a burial ground, who had also built a chapel upon it for the celebration of masses for the repose of the dead. Here 50,000 people are said to have been buried—an appropriate spot, perhaps, for a monastery, whose inmates are at least dead to the world.

But the Flemish knight changed his intention with regard to his purchase : and instead of making it a place of repose for the dead, he made it a retreat for the living. In 1371, the Carthusian Monastery was completed.

None of the buildings of that time are now in existence, but their extent may in part be traced. They formed an immense quadrangle, with the exception of the gateway, and some out-buildings, a "wyndmylle," and a "fleysche kychen," called "Egypte," indicating the severity of the life of the Carthusian monks. The whole was surrounded by a cloister. If it were only now in existence, what a treasure we should possess, what a place to roam in and visit, and revel in the old-world atmosphere surrounding it ; just as we do in some of those ancient monasteries abroad. Though many of them are now abandoned, almost, to the owls and the bats, there is a religious sanctity about them which time does not destroy ; they are

haunted by the ghosts of dead and gone monks : and in every cell and cloister and from every doorway we seem to see cowled figures issuing forth—like Adam and Eve from Paradise—" with wandering steps and slow, taking their solitary way."

Here the monks lived in all the austerity of their Order. Their number does not seem to have been recorded. Probably then, as in these days in other monasteries, it varied. The monks were strictly cloistered : but there were lay brethren attached to the institution.

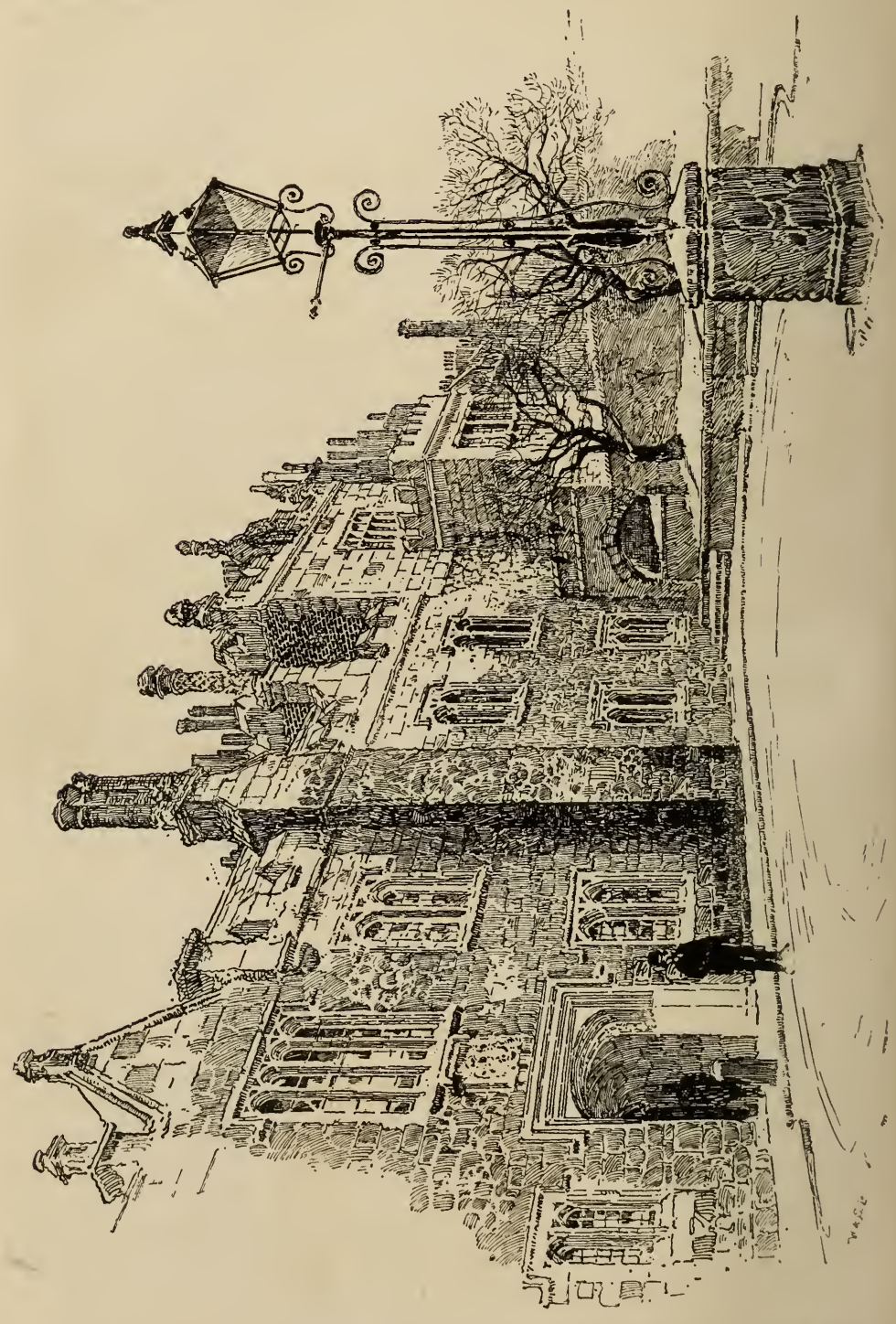
There seem to have been some twenty-three or twenty-four cells in all. A portion of the old wall still remains, and some time ago it was possible to discern the opening through which food was passed to the monk occupying the cell. They were more rigid in those times than they are in these : though the Order is still sufficiently severe to make anyone pause and count the cost before entering a Carthusian Monastery. Then they never spoke to each other; never met in a general refectory for the principal meal of the day. They do so now ; and up in the Dauphiné Alps are allowed to walk out once a week ; and the curious little community may be seen wandering about the silent and deserted paths of the Alps : in winter their brown cowls strangely contrasting with the pure white snow, though it is scarcely whiter than their attenuated faces. But in one sense of the word the paths are not silent ; for in this weekly walk, the brothers are allowed to talk to each other. One can imagine how their tongues are loosened, and how they make the most of their short relaxation. One can fancy them leaping and shouting, and giving boisterous expression to the ecstasy of this short freedom, this temporary return to something like life. But it is not so in reality. Long fasting and penance, midnight masses and daily ordinances, the solitude and gloom of silent and secret cells—these do their work ; buoyancy is subdued, the spirit dies out.

And what can they have to talk about? What experiences disclose, what confidences exchange? Only too surely and sadly and monotonously for them, les jours se suivent et se ressemblent.

In the old days, the Charterhouse monks, in the midst of a busy life and world, must have felt themselves equally secluded and solitary. Perhaps even more so. For the hum of life must occasionally have reached them in their cells, and possibly raised rebellious thoughts and wishes ; regrets for having withdrawn from that world ; vain imaginings of its pleasures and attractions ; a desire for the " flesh pots of Egypt." Man is but mortal, and human nature will now and then rise to the surface, in spite of cells and solitude, fasting and penance. It was wise, no doubt, of St. Bruno to bury himself so far from the world, and found the mother monastery where its rush and roar is too distant even to be realised.

But the Charterhouse was not always to remain a monastery. Its first prior lived and flourished and died full of years and peace. He had even increased the strictness of the rules, which were founded

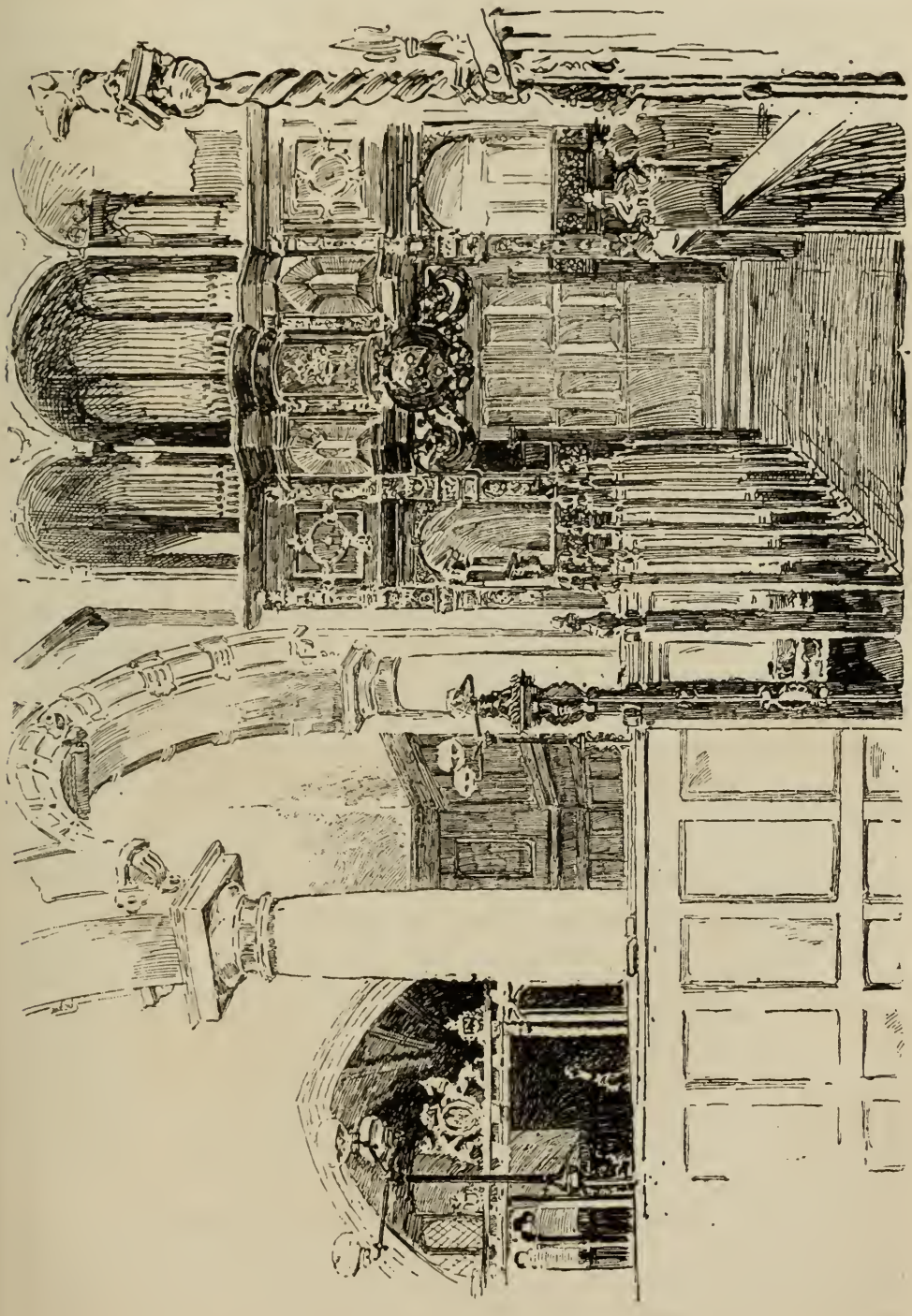
upon the severe forms of the Benedictines. Absolute silence and solitude existed. They met in the refectory on the rarest occasions.



THE MASTER'S COURT.

They were not allowed to converse even with the lay brother who supplied their daily food. That food consisted of the barest description: meat was seldom allowed; and on Fridays they had bread and

water only. The small opening through which the food was inserted was formed in a zigzag, so that the monk and the lay brother could not see each other. They met only in the sanctity of the church, and



CHAPEL.

then each silently took his appropriated seat, his eyes cast down, his head cowled until service began. They always wore horsehair shirts.

All these rules were confirmed by the first prior. But as years

rolled on, they somewhat relaxed their severity. In the days of the last prior—Prior Houghton—they even entertained guests within the sacred precincts, and it is recorded that Sir Thomas More and Dean Colet were two of them. Before this period there had been few changes in the building itself. Prior Houghton enlarged it; and the Master's Court, Wash-house Court, and the inner Gateway date from his reign. This Wash-house Court is one of the most beautiful portions of the building now remaining. It is quiet and secluded, and as you enter its grave enclosure you are carried far back into an ancient world. Its architecture varies in style, and is not all of the same date; but the mullioned windows, some square, some gothic, the lights and shadows of centuries upon the walls, the dormer windows and the slanting roofs, form a picture that you will scarcely equal in this City of London.

Prior Houghton fell on troubled times. He was destined to be the last of his Order. Henry VIII. ascended the throne, and in due time waged war against these religious Orders. The Papal power was disowned, and amongst others, the Charterhouse monks suffered. They were treated without mercy. Some were hanged, some were starved to death in their cells. Houghton was executed at Tyburn on May 5th, 1535. His head was severed from his body, and was raised upon a pole on London Bridge.

So the Priory was dissolved, and King Henry VIII. taking possession of what did not belong to him, with that fine disregard to the laws of meum and tuum which characterised him, bestowed it upon Lord North. Changes were the order of the day.

The monastic buildings were pulled down, the cells disappeared. At midnight there was no longer seen the small procession of monks flitting down the corridors to the chapel; no longer heard the dull monotony of Gregorian Chants; the subdued voices of monks going through the midnight mass. New buildings arose; old buildings were enlarged and altered; the Strangers' Court was turned into a dwelling-house. The Guesten Hall was enlarged. The staircase leading to the halls above was constructed; and both rooms and staircase still exist; the former—the Governor's Room—with its fine tapestry, imposing mantelpiece, and plaster ceilings. All these exist much as they were, together with the chimney-pieces in the old Gown Boys' Hall and the Master's Lodge. The latter is very quaint and beautiful; in a centre panel is seen the portrait of Sutton; and other interesting portraits hang upon its walls.

Here Lord North lived a secular life, and the old monastic precincts rang with revelry, where once nothing but the severest decorum existed. The very stones must have blushed occasionally at such unfamiliar sounds. Here he entertained his royal patron, Henry VIII.; and here, too, Elizabeth visited him when her turn came to reign and rule. But there had been great slaughter, many martyrs in Smithfield, between the reigns of the bluff old King and the Virgin Queen.

Elizabeth, however, was a staunch Protestant, and upheld the Faith: and it might fairly be hoped that henceforth it was established on a sure basis. There is a portion at the end of the Cloister in the Charterhouse still called Queen Elizabeth's Walk. James I. stayed here when he first came to England from Scotland.

Time rolled on, and from Lord North the Charterhouse passed to the Duke of Norfolk: until in 1611 Thomas Sutton bought the premises and founded his famous Charity. This was a school for "poor boys," and a refuge for "poor brethren." With the buildings, as he found them, he interfered very little and made few changes. He added a north aisle to the chapel, which, with its arcade, its semi-circular arches and Doric capitals, is a very interesting example of the architecture of the period. He built the schoolhouse for the "poor children;" and this same schoolhouse was handed down to posterity, and was used when the Institution had changed its character, and was frequented more by the children of the rich than of the poor. In 1872, when Charterhouse School was removed to Godalming, the school buildings were pulled down with unsparing hand to make way for new buildings for Merchant Taylor's School, by whom the site had been purchased for £90,000. Thus some of the most ancient traditions of old Charterhouse School disappeared for ever from the face of the earth: and we can imagine the regret of many an old Carthusian as he visits the scenes of his boyhood, and, seeking his old haunts, finds them not.

Ascending the broad staircase leading to the governor's room, and passing through a door which leads you on to the roof of the present cloisters, you have a full view of the side of the school buildings, of the fine play-green with its racket and tennis courts. On the opposite wall you notice the word "CROWN" painted in large white letters, and this, the custodian will tell you, was traced by the hand of the late Lord Ellenborough, when he was a Carthusian.

The dwellings of the "Poor Brothers" remain. These are decayed gentlemen, for whom the world, or fate or fortune, must have proved too much, since all have occupied a better position in life than they have now attained to.

Yet, if they can cultivate that "contented mind which is a continual feast," their autumn of life may still have much to recommend it, contain much peace and happiness. Anything more quiet, indeed, than this retreat in the very heart of London cannot be imagined. Henceforth nothing need disturb them. They know exactly what to expect, what is before them. The "calmness of old age" may enfold them as they put on the mantle of the Order—or "gown," as I believe it is called.

Each brother must be at least sixty years of age. Each has two rooms given to him; receives light and fuel; roll and milk in the morning; an excellent dinner at three o'clock, daily; and an income of £36 a year. There are few restrictions. They may go out into the

world and visit their friends, and remain away for weeks and months at a time; and return when they please to their quiet precincts.

You may attend the chapel on a Sunday morning and see them assemble in the centre pews set apart for their use. Each pensioner has his own seat, and keeps it jealously. The chapel itself is interesting. The communion table is in the south-east corner, and above it is a beautiful stained window representing the Crucifixion, given by the masters and boys of Charterhouse School in 1844.

The Master of Charterhouse and the Preacher will probably perform the Service between them, and you, a stranger, will possibly occupy a seat immediately below them, but a little to their left. Of the singing and playing, great things cannot be recorded; but the whole service is characterised by a simplicity that is refreshing, and very appropriate to its principal congregation: the grey-headed gentlemen who have renounced the pomps and vanities of the world, and withdrawn from it almost as completely as those monks that flourished there six centuries ago.

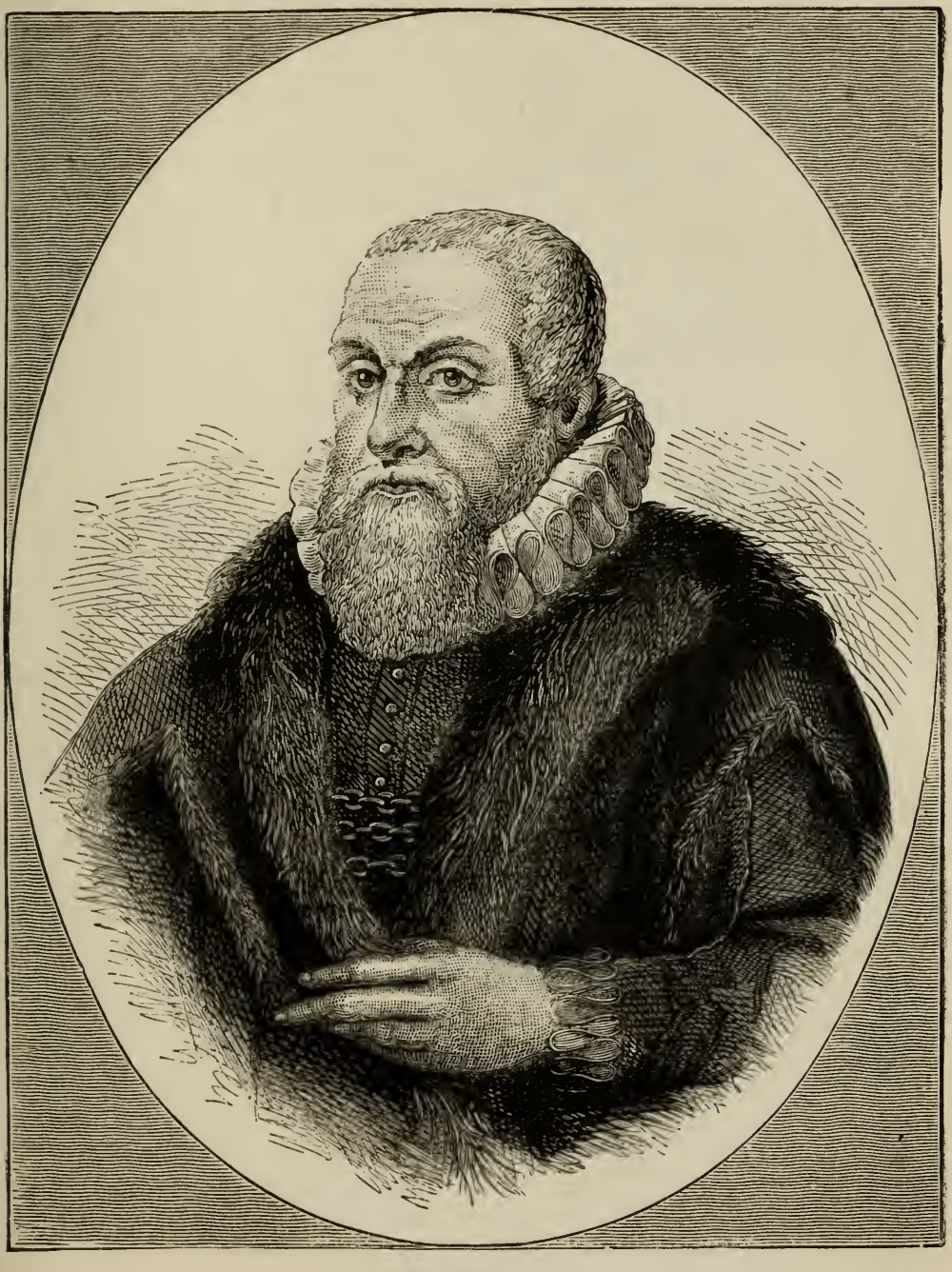
In front of you, on the other side of the chapel, curtains are drawn before the arches. There is a sad look about them; for once upon a time those curtains were undrawn, and the benches beyond them were filled with the happy faces of old Charterhouse boys; amongst whom at different epochs might be numbered Crashaw the poet; Isaac Barrow the divine, celebrated for being the most fighting boy in the school; Blackstone, Addison, Steele; John Wesley, who attributed his long life to obeying his father's wish that he should run round the Charterhouse playing-green three times every morning before breakfast; Lord Ellenborough, Lord Liverpool, and Bishop Monk; Thackeray, Eastlake, John Leech, Bishop Thirlwall, and George Grote. A goodly array of names, conferring distinction upon the old school.

But the curtains are now drawn in the chapel, and the seats behind are empty and silent: excepting that you people them with ghosts—the shades of the great army of the departed.

As you leave the chapel, in the outer vestibule you see tablets to the memory of Thackeray, John Leech, and others; and your mind wanders insensibly to the singular figure that penned Vanity Fair, Pendennis, and Colonel Newcome; you are in danger of falling into a dream and losing yourself in a past world; and this old Charterhouse is the very spot for indulging in a reverie. In the chapel itself, near Thomas Sutton, lies Lord Ellenborough.

The Brethren themselves may fall into many a reverie, and few will disturb them. It is seldom that anyone from the outer world strolls in upon their seclusion. They may sit upon the benches beneath the windows, and muse upon the past, which in many instances must have held a good deal that is sad. Here and there upon the walls you will observe a trained fig-tree, so that they may almost literally sit under its shadow. They may pace the court and quadrangles, or

passing through the inner court, like Harvey, meditate amongst the tombs. For against the further walls are tablets erected to the memory of those who lie beneath: and one admires in some cases the



THOMAS SUTTON.

old-fashioned dignity and stateliness of expression of a past age, whilst in others, the inevitable "rhyme"—so often the case on tombstones—has rather the effect of raising a smile than of drawing a tear.

I do not know whether the Brethren are given to calling very much upon each other; whether they go in for afternoon tea and polite attentions and reciprocal favours. The Community consisted of eighty Brethren, but "hard times" and depreciated land have brought them down to about fifty; but it is probable that amongst so many there is a mixture of temperaments. Some will like solitude and seclusion, and perhaps seldom come forth from their shells. Quiet attentions would be lost upon them; and they only ask to be left to peace and repose. Others, more genially inclined, meet often, and take interest in all that is going on in the world of which they have ceased to be active members.

But there are two occasions on which they meet together. One is daily at the hour of three, in the dining-room. It is a noble room panelled with old oak, with galleries, from which the panels are withdrawn on state occasions—such as Founder's Day—when music accompanies the repast. Here, too, they occasionally have entertainments, and sometimes one or two of the Brothers contribute to the evening's amusement. A fine portrait of Thomas Sutton looks gravely and approvingly down upon all: as if he would bid them be happy and contented, and contrast their lot, not with the more prosperous days that once were theirs, but with the fate of those on whom the world has not smiled, yet who having found no harbour of refuge for their life's autumn, are still left to buffet with its turbulent waves.

The other is a weekly occasion, when they assemble in the little chapel. Here they must feel a double refuge from the world. It is all they have to look forward to—the future life: all indeed that everyone has to look forward to, rich or poor, when the autumn of life has set in, and the grasshopper is beginning to be a burden. To them, life has been more or less a failure; riches have not increased, their barns have not remained full and flourishing; and as the preacher before his sermon prays that "they may so pass through things temporal that they finally lose not the things eternal," they must feel that here and here only is their better part. As they separate after the Blessing, and file out in their gowns, and return to their quiet rooms, it may be that, in spite of crotchets and quavers, the deceitfulness of the human heart and the infirmities of the flesh, the Peace which passeth all understanding has fallen upon each. If so, blessed are they, and richer than the monarch upon his throne whose spirit perhaps goes forth on its quest, and returns to him like the dove to the ark, restless and unhappy, because as yet it has found it not.

So we leave them, a Sabbath stillness over all; a sound of far-off bells ringing out upon the air, calling other worshippers to other services; above them the blue, serene sky, which by-and-by fades into night; and they look up, and ponder upon the mysteries of that world to which all are hastening; and receive the benediction of the stars.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LORD MELMONT.

I.

BEFORE entering on the personal portion of my narrative, it may be advisable to furnish the reader with a statement of the circumstances connected with the strange disappearance of Lord Melmont, as far as the inquiry instituted at the time succeeded in bringing them to light.

Lord Melmont, at the time of his disappearance, was sixty-five years of age. The next heir was his brother, the Hon. Guy Fontayne, who was some fifteen years the younger, and between whom and his lordship there had been a bitter feud of many years' standing, with the merits or particulars of which we have nothing to do here. Lord Melmont, who had never been married, was something of a bookworm and curio collector, and very much of a recluse. He lived a secluded life at Oseney Towers, the family seat in Midlandshire, rarely going into society and seeing no visitors, unless it were now and then some old friend of like tastes with his own, or some curiosity-monger who was desirous of tempting him with a "choice bargain" in ceramics, carved ivory, or cloisonné work, as the case might be.

His lordship was by no means a rich man for a person of his rank, the entailed estates only bringing him in an income of somewhere about twelve hundred a year; but as he had always lived well within that amount, he could not be called a poor man in the ordinary meaning of the term. At his mother's death, many years before, a lump sum of twenty thousand pounds had come to him, which he had contrived to invest to such good purpose that in the course of time it had doubled itself. The question of how he should dispose of this amount by will was one which had troubled him a good deal of late years. Mr. Finch, the family lawyer, who lived at Doningworth, some half-dozen miles away, was never surprised by the receipt of a message summoning him to the Towers, the object of such visits being either to add a codicil to the will already in existence, or otherwise to draw up a fresh instrument entirely.

It was on the afternoon of a certain fifth of July that Mr. Finch received a brief note from Lord Melmont desiring his presence at the Towers at noon next day. The lawyer pursed up his lips and shook his head. To a man who in all the important affairs of life always knew his own mind and, having arrived at a certain conclusion, hardly ever deviated from it by so much as a hairbreadth, such fluctuations of purpose as those Lord Melmont so often allowed himself to give way to, seemed nothing less than deplorable. His lordship's last will was barely ten months old, and in all probability after to-morrow it might be looked upon as so much waste paper.

But in such a case a lawyer's province is not to protest, but to

obey, and noon next day found Mr. Finch seated in the library at Oseney Towers with pen, ink and paper in front of him.

"I've sent for you once more, Finch, on the usual errand, and I hope to goodness it will be the last time I shall have occasion to do so," began his lordship—a thin, somewhat careworn, but still handsome man.

The lawyer bowed.

"Since I saw you last I have decided to materially alter the provisions of the last will which you drew up at my request. By that document I bequeathed the sum of forty thousand pounds in equal proportions to four charitable institutions which were duly specified therein. Since then, however, I have changed my mind and have now decided to leave only half that amount to the institutions in question, and the remaining half, that is to say, twenty thousand pounds, to my brother Guy. He did me a very bitter wrong many years ago, or what I felt to be such at the time, and I have found it hard to forgive him. Of late, however, it has seemed that I may, perhaps, have treated him more harshly than I ought to have done, and that there may have been extenuating circumstances in the case which never reached my ears. Whenever a doubt exists it is a maxim in law that the accused shall have the benefit of it. I give Guy the benefit. I have no wish to see him—nor he me, in all probability—but the twenty thousand pounds will more than clear his debts (at least, I trust so), and allow of his coming into the property unsaddled with any encumbrances. So, Finch, if you will be good enough to take a note of my wishes and have the new will drawn up, ready to be signed and witnessed by Friday next, I shall feel obliged. All the remaining provisions of the old will in the way of minor legacies and so on you will be good enough to embody in the new one exactly as they stand."

The lawyer stayed at the Towers to luncheon, after which his gig was brought round and he drove himself back to Doningworth, his lordship standing on the steps of the side entrance to see him off; and that was the last that Eusebius Finch saw of Lord Melmont.

In the course of the afternoon a certain London dealer, Jared Sirons by name, who had been there more than once before, called at the Towers, and, after some bargaining, succeeded in selling to his lordship a pair of massive silver altar candlesticks, very curiously chased, of Spanish sixteenth century work. After he had gone, no one else called.

Lord Melmont read as usual in the library till a late hour—or what is deemed a late hour in the country. At half-past ten, Bax, the butler—an old and trusted servant—entered the library to ascertain whether his master had any last orders to give him. Finding that he had none, Bax bade his lordship a respectful good-night and presently went off to bed, the rest of the household having already retired. It was no unusual thing for Lord Melmont to sit up for two or three hours after everyone else in the Towers was in bed.

At nine o'clock next morning one of the maids—Lord Melmont's valet had left him about a month before, and he had not yet obtained another to his liking—knocked at his bedroom door, and having deposited a can of hot water outside it, went about her business.

At ten o'clock, finding that his master had not yet come down, Bax went upstairs and made bold to knock at the door. Again and yet again he knocked, each time louder than before, but without eliciting any response. Then, trembling with an unspoken fear, he opened the door and went in. But his lordship was not there, neither, as far as could be judged, had he been there at all during the night. The two candles lighted by Bax had burnt themselves down to their socket and the bed had not been slept in.

A search party was at once organised and his lordship was sought for high and low, both in the house and the grounds, but to no avail. Doors and windows had all been found closed and fastened exactly as left overnight. In the library, the lamp, like the candles upstairs, had evidently been allowed to burn itself out. On a table close to the easy-chair lay a book, face downward, which his lordship had, presumably, been reading; there, too, stood the antique brass candlestick with which he had been in the habit of lighting himself from the library to his bedroom. Yet, strange to say, the two altar candlesticks so lately bought, which Bax distinctly remembered to have seen on the bureau when speaking to his master for the last time, were missing, and were nowhere to be found.

Summoned by Bax, Mr. Finch was quickly on the spot. The first thing the lawyer did was to communicate with the police, and the second to despatch a telegram to the heir-at-law, the Hon. Guy Fontayne, who, at that time, was vegetating with his wife and family in a remote corner of Normandy. Then he gave instructions for the fish-pond in the park to be dragged, although it was difficult to understand how his lordship could have contrived to quit the house without leaving some unfastened door or window to tell the story of his exit. Lord Melmont's keys, or rather those of them which opened his private drawers, had disappeared with him, but wherever he thought it requisite to do so, Mr. Finch affixed his seal, so as to prevent any surreptitious tampering with the locks, for in so strange a conjunction of circumstances there was no knowing what might, or might not, happen.

The Hon. Guy reached the Towers at the earliest possible moment after his receipt of the telegram. He found that everything had been done which could be done towards fathoming the mystery of his brother's disappearance. Two detectives from Scotland Yard had quartered themselves at the Towers (and very comfortable quarters they doubtless found them), but for any apparent use they were, they might just as well have been stationed at Timbuctoo. Then, in the course of a few days, the heir, with Mr. Finch's concurrence, decided to break open his brother's private drawers with the view of ascertain-

ing whether any of them contained any document, or memoranda, which would tend to throw light on a mystery which seemed but to become more impenetrable with every day that passed. Sir James Judkins, the only one of his neighbours with whom Lord Melmont had been on terms of intimacy, was asked to be present on the occasion. Nothing, however, was found to reward their search. All his lordship's letters and accounts were found docketed and labelled with as much care and exactitude as though he had been a man of business pure and simple, but nowhere did the searchers come across any hint of a mystery in his life, either in the past or the present.

"By the way, Mr. Finch," said the Hon. Guy, when the three gentlemen had brought their perquisition to an end, "do you happen to know where my brother kept the family diamonds, which, as you are doubtless aware, go with the entail, and are of great value?"

"I am nearly sure that they have always been in the charge of his lordship's bankers at Doningworth."

"Perhaps you will kindly ascertain, when you get back home, whether such is the case, and let me know the result."

In the course of next day, Mr. Fontayne received the following note:—

"Dear Sir,—In answer to my inquiry, the Doningworth Banking Company inform me that although the Melmont jewels had been in their custody (except when required for a few days at a time by the late Lady Melmont, your mother) for upwards of half-a-century, they were removed out of their keeping by your brother on the 31st of August three years ago, and that they hold his acknowledgment of their receipt by him. As to where they may have been bestowed by his lordship since that time, they have no information.

"I am, dear sir, your obedient servant,

"Eusebius Finch."

Lord Melmont's London bankers, on being communicated with, repudiated all knowledge of the missing jewels, while a thorough search of every room at the Towers which his lordship had been in the habit of using, brought to light no trace of their existence. Here was another link added to the mystery.

Weeks merged into months, and the situation remained unchanged. Under the peculiar circumstances of the case, the law would not allow of Mr. Fontayne taking out letters of administration, nor of his touching a penny of the rents, and nothing remained for him but to go back to his wife abroad. He was a very poor man, and he felt most keenly the position in which he was placed. But before long the Court of Chancery intervened, and appointed a receiver to the estate, ignoring the existence of Mr. Fontayne entirely. His bitterness could scarcely fail to be accentuated by the knowledge, imparted to him by Mr. Finch, of his brother's changed intentions with regard to him which were to have been embodied in the new

will. But so perversely had Fate treated him that neither had there been time to have the new will drawn up and authenticated before his brother had so strangely vanished, nor was there, so far, any proof forthcoming that the latter might not still be reckoned among the living.

And so some years went on—I forget exactly how many—till at length the legal big-wigs with whom rests the decision in all such matters agreed (but not till after the presentation of sundry petitions, both on the part of the heir-at-law, and that of the trustees of the institutions which were to have benefited so largely under his lordship's will) to find and record that William Jarvis Heston Fontayne, fifth Baron Melmont, was legally defunct, and that his estate should forthwith be administered. Thus, after long waiting, the Hon. Guy did at length succeed to the title and entail, together with whatever surplus might remain out of the accumulated back rents after the payment of all legal and other expenses, while the personalty, so far as forty thousand pounds of it was concerned, was divided in accordance with the testator's instructions as embodied in the will dated about ten months before his disappearance.

The new lord had been a poor man all his life, having, of late years, had little more to live on than the four hundred a year which his wife had brought with her, but her ladyship died within three months of her husband's accession to the title, and her income died with her.

Thus the sixth Baron Melmont, with only twelve hundred a year left on which to support his dignity and title, felt himself to be still, as he himself termed it, merely a superior sort of pauper. Seeing that on such an income it was impossible to keep up Oseney Towers in a style befitting the family dignity, he shut the old house up, rarely visiting it for more than a week at a time once or twice a year, and still continuing to spend the greater part of his time abroad. His family consisted of an only son, who was married and in the army.

II.

Although I, Myles Garner, who write this narrative, am an American born, my father and mother were both English people, and, in point of fact, had only emigrated to the States some five or six years before I made my first appearance on the scene.

My father had taken out with him a certain amount of capital (how much he never told me), and although a man of limited education, he was possessed of a large measure of natural ability in all the affairs of practical life, together with that power of forecasting and of seeing farther ahead than the majority of his fellows which seems almost like an intuition, or supplementary gift of nature, with some men.

He began by speculating in what we Americans call "real estate," and was extraordinarily successful; so much so, indeed, that in a

comparatively few years he had accumulated a very considerable fortune. As he often said, his greatest regret in life was his lack of education ; but he was determined that his son should have nothing to complain of on that score. Whatever money could do for me in that respect was done.

It had been intended that I should study for the Bar, but an accident to my father, which permanently disabled him, altogether upset the arrangement, and now that he could no longer travel from place to place himself, he was under the necessity of taking me as his assistant. Gradually, however, he, so to speak, drew in his horns, and reduced the dimensions of his business, finally disposing of it all, except a small section close at home, just enough to keep him employed after the fashion which had now become a second nature to him.

Thus it fell out that, at the age of six-and-twenty, I found myself at liberty to carry out the ardent wish of many years, which was to visit, first of all, the Old Country (which I could not help looking upon as my real home), and thence wing my flight to France and Italy, where also there was much that I longed to see and explore.

My father's influence sufficed to provide me with some excellent letters of introduction, so that from the day I set foot in London I found myself, so to speak, surrounded by friends. I was, indeed, so warmly welcomed that the thought would now and then cross my mind that in some cases—I only say in some—the knowledge that I was the only son of a millionaire might have had something to do with the heartiness of my reception. But be that as it may, I presently found myself in the full swim of the London season and the recipient of more invitations than I well knew how to accept.

Nowhere, so far as my knowledge goes, are there so many charming middle-aged and elderly ladies to be found as in London. I am told that many of them are nothing more than scheming manœuvrers, old campaigners whose mission in life is to weave the web and spread the lure which is intended to inveigle young men of fortune into the bondage of matrimony. How that may be I know not, but this I do know, that about many of them there is a sweet and gracious charm, a lingering fragrance, as it might be, of the May-time of their own lives, an indescribable something which I have never found equalled elsewhere.

One of the most charming of the elderly ladies to whom I had the honour of being introduced was a certain Miss Avison, whose age no member of the male sex had any right to so much as guess at. She lived in a sunny little house in Kensington, and it was not till after I had called upon her three or four times that a second and more powerful magnet was added to the attraction which had hitherto sufficed to draw me to No. 19, Winchester Square.

The magnet in question was Miss Avison's niece, Wilma Fontayne, grand-daughter to Lord Melmont of Oseney Towers. To see her

was for me to fall hopelessly in love with her. In the course of the six or seven weeks I had already been in London, I had danced, chatted and flirted after a mildly Platonic fashion with any number of pretty girls, but never with one whose eyes winged an arrow into my heart with such dire effect as did those of Wilma Fontayne. I am not going to describe her, or even to attempt to do so. To coldly catalogue the colour of her eyes and hair, to describe whether she was tall or short, dark or fair, after the style of an auctioneer's clerk taking an inventory of a room, would seem to me little better than an act of profanation, and would, besides, convey to the reader no sort of idea of the indefinite charm she had for me, which, I am persuaded, was altogether independent of mere personal appearance.

More and more frequent became my visits to Winchester Square, in addition to which I often met Miss Fontayne at this ball or that garden-party. Miss Avison, who was keen-sighted enough in most matters, could hardly have failed to see what was the matter with me, and I accepted it as a sort of tacit encouragement on her part that no sign of disapproval of my growing intimacy with her niece emanated from her. As far as Wilma herself was concerned, I soon found that I should have little reason to despair. By a score of indescribable signs and tokens, such as it is only given to a lover's eyes to read and comprehend, she allowed me to see that I was not indifferent to her. Then, after a little while, there came an evening when I ventured to whisper a certain question in her ear, her answer to which made me feel as if I were the happiest man in the world.

Next forenoon, at the earliest moment which etiquette allows, I sought an interview with Miss Avison. She listened to what I had to say without the least sign of annoyance; indeed, as it seemed to me, rather with the air of one who sees a pet scheme well on its way to fulfilment.

"My dear young friend," she said with her pleasant smile, "if I were to say that I am surprised by what you have just told me, I should be treating you somewhat disingenuously. In fact, I may tell you that I have seen what has been coming for some time, and you may gauge my feelings in the matter by the fact that I have taken no steps to put a stop to it. It was, of course, the proper thing for you to come to me in the first instance, but I must tell you that I have no control whatever over Wilma's future. That rests entirely, at least till she shall come of age two years hence, with her grandfather, Lord Melmont (for both Wilma's parents are dead), and it is to him that you will have to go and state your case. As it happens, his lordship is as proud as he is poor, which is saying not a little, and I think it more than likely that he will pack you unceremoniously about your business when he hears on what errand you have sought him. However, I don't want to discourage you beforehand. Lord Melmont will be in town for a couple of days in a fortnight's time, and I will not fail to let you know when and where he may be seen.

Meanwhile, I know of no reason why we should not see you here as usual."

Kind, generous-hearted Miss Avison! I kissed her hand at leaving with as chivalrous a regard as if it had been the hand of the Queen of Beauty herself.

Ten days later I found myself closeted with Lord Melmont, a tall, thin, handsome old man of eighty, with pride—the pride of birth and station—marked in every lineament of his haughty, clear-cut features. He listened patiently and courteously to all I had to say in furtherance of my suit, the only sign of interest he showed being an all but imperceptible lifting now and again of his bushy eyebrows. Something in his manner gave me the impression that he was already aware of my intended visit and its purport.

"You tell me, Mr. Garner," he said, when I had done speaking, "that your parents emigrated to America a few years before you were born. Pray, what was your father's position in life previously to his leaving England?"

"My father was a builder and architect in a small way of business at Twyford Cross in Midlandshire."

"At Twyford Cross! Hum. And your grandfather, Mr. Garner, what was he?—I presume that you had a grandfather?"—this with the slightest sarcastic inflection of the voice.

"I hope so, my lord—even as you had," I answered, flushing hotly. "As far as I am aware, my grandfather held no higher position in the social scale than that of an ordinary carpenter."

"Was *his* home also at Twyford Cross?"

"I believe so."

"Hum.—And your father has prospered in life, and is now a very wealthy man, and you are his only son?"

I bowed assent.

"Are you aware, Mr. Garner, that Twyford Cross is the hamlet immediately adjoining my seat of Oseney Towers?"

"I was not aware of that fact, my lord."

"Consequently, if your grandfather's position was what you state it to have been, he was, doubtless, one of the workmen on my father's estate, sent in to do any odd jobs when required. Yet now that worthy person's grandson proposes to himself to marry my grand-daughter! 'Tis but one instance more of the irony of circumstances." He lay back in his chair for a few moments, tapping the finger-tips of one hand against those of the other and staring full at me the while.

"I am quite aware, Mr. Garner," he presently resumed, "that it is the fashion nowadays for rich Americans and Colonials to come over to England in search of husbands or wives, as the case may be, bartering their gold for rank, or position, and although it seems to me that there is far too much of such trafficking, I am yet willing to admit that there may be occasions where such an alliance is mutually

advantageous to both the contracting parties. But to take the present case, which is all we have really to consider: although all the world knows me to be poor, and although my grand-daughter will go all but portionless to the man who weds her, I thank heaven that I have not yet sunk so low in my own estimation as to give my sanction to so outrageous a mésalliance as the one you have done me the honour to propose to me. No, Mr. Garner, my grand-daughter is not for you, and I trust you will recognise that fact clearly and unmistakably. To a man of sense, which I am sure you are, a word more would be a superfluity. Permit me, therefore, to wish you a very good-morning."

He dismissed me with a polite wave of the hand and a frozen, high-bred smile.

"I was afraid how you would fare," said Miss Avison when I told her the result of the interview. "As if it can really matter a fig though your grandfather *were* a carpenter on the Towers estate! Such distinctions are now becoming both antiquated and absurd. But Melmont belongs to the old school and can't help his prejudices. Well, Wilma will be of age and her own mistress in a couple of years' time," she added with a meaning smile.

It was quite evident that in Miss Avison I had the staunchest of friends.

"We can but wait and be true to each other meanwhile," whispered Wilma when I told her. It was the truest philosophy, and I accepted it as such.

Two days later Miss Fontayne received a peremptory note from her grandfather, in which she was bidden to at once say good-bye to her aunt and join his lordship at his hotel, as he proposed going back to Normandy on the morrow and taking her with him. Opposition was not to be thought of; there was nothing for it but to submit with the best grace possible.

Scarcely was Wilma gone before the thought came to me that I would run down by train as far as Twyford Cross and see for myself the place where my father and mother had been born, and had grown up, and had fallen in love and married, and where my grandfather and I know not how many more of my humble progenitors had lived out their placid lives, and found a final resting-place beneath the turf of its churchyard.

It proved to be a pretty rural hamlet, embosomed in greenery, but with no special features to mark it out from scores of other villages which the modern builder has not yet found it worth while to lay his desecrating hand on, and presenting in all essentials the same picture to-day that they did eighty or a hundred years ago.

While on the spot, it seemed to me that I ought not to neglect seeing Oseney Towers, which was open to the public twice a week on payment of a shilling per head. It was the first time I had been over a genuine sixteenth-century country-house, and greatly pleased

and interested I was with everything I saw. As I strolled through the spacious rooms, in which there still lingered an air of faded grandeur, and scanned the lineaments of the dead-and-gone Fontaynes in the picture gallery—haughty, high-bred looking men and beautiful but scarcely less proud-looking women—it did, of a truth, seem a piece of audacious presumption on my part, that I, whose forefathers for generations had been humble workmen in the shadow of its walls, should aspire to wed a daughter of this ancient house. But so does the whirligig of Time bring in its revenges.

It was while stopping at the only tolerable inn in the village that I first heard the story of the disappearance of the last Lord Melmont, as far as the details of it were known to the rural gossips. A comparison of dates showed me that the event in question must have happened between three and four years after my father's departure from Twyford Cross for the United States. Thinking that the matter was one which would be likely to interest him, I was at some pains to collect as many particulars about it as were obtainable on the spot. Already it had become an old-time story with something of a legendary character about it; already the plain facts of the case were being overlaid and obscured by those extraneous growths and accretions with which, as time goes on, the simple, wonder-loving rustic intellect infallibly clothes every circumstance which in any way trenches on the mysterious, or for which a commonplace explanation is not then and there forthcoming.

On reaching London I found a telegram from my father awaiting me. My mother was seriously ill, and I was begged to return home as fast as steam could carry me.

Three hours later I was on my way to Liverpool to catch the next New York liner, but before starting I found time to drop a hurried note to Miss Avison, informing her of the reason of my sudden departure.

III.

On reaching home I was made happy by finding that my dear mother had passed through the crisis of her illness, and was fairly on the way to recovery. My father had telegraphed for me without her knowledge, and although she was overjoyed at seeing me, she was at the same time grieved to think that my long-projected tour should have been cut short on her account; nor would she rest satisfied till I had promised to resume it as soon as she should be thoroughly convalescent.

My father was even more interested than I had expected he would be in the account I had brought him of the strange disappearance of Lord Melmont, of whom, I now learned for the first time, he had had some personal knowledge. He made me repeat the particulars I had gathered again and again, till every detail was fixed in his

memory, and I could tell from sundry remarks he let drop from time to time that his mind was frequently brooding over what he had heard.

It would appear that at the time of the disappearance, my father was living in a remote western settlement, to which news from the outside world—or, at any rate, English news—rarely penetrated, and although the New York and other leading papers had doubtless commented on the affair at the time, it was not to be wondered at that no account of it had reached as far as Tuscarora City.

By the time I had been three months at home my mother's health was thoroughly re-established, but not till Dr. Dawson had paid his last visit would I consent to fix the date of my return to Europe. My father seemed as anxious as my mother to hasten my departure, a fact which puzzled me, till, on the day before I was due to sail, he sent for me to his own room and there told me something which startled me not a little; following it up with certain instructions which he desired me to carry out as soon as practicable after my arrival in England. I was no longer surprised at his anxiety that I should go back there with as little delay as might be.

I had not mentioned the name of Wilma Fontayne to either of my parents—while matters remained as they were between her and me, no purpose would have been served by doing so. My love for her was the one sweet secret of my life, and as such I cherished it. It was the first time I had kept anything from my mother, but when the proper moment should have arrived, she would be the first to whom it should be told. Only two years more and Wilma would be of age. Till then silence was the wisest policy.

It was a great disappointment to me on reaching London to find that Miss Avison was in Scotland. I was hungering for news of Wilma. Was she with her aunt or her grandfather? Should I see her when Miss Avison returned to town? Or was she still shut up in the old lord's Norman château and beyond her lover's reach? It was easy to ask myself these tormenting questions, but impossible to answer them. Time and patience alone could avail.

After a couple of days in London I went down to Twyford Cross and took up my quarters at the old inn where I had stayed before.

It happened to be holiday-time, and when in the course of the following forenoon I strolled up to the Towers, I found quite a little crowd of sight-seers waiting to be admitted. At length the doors were opened and we all streamed in. Having been conducted over the house so recently, I knew the order of our progress and all there was to be seen, and it was not till we reached what was known as the "Ethiopian Room" that I felt more than the most tepid interest in the various objects which our worthy guide pointed out to us with the tone and air of one condescending to our ignorance.

The Ethiopian Room was so called because its massive white marble chimney-piece, on which was carved an intricate profusion of

tropical fruits and foliage, had for supporters, one on each side of the huge open fireplace, a couple of life-size female figures in black marble, with thick lips, squat noses and frizzy hair, the only points of relief about them being their white, gleaming teeth and tawny, staring eyeballs. There were a few pictures in the room, chiefly seascapes and interiors of the Dutch school, but no furniture except a large screen of Oriental workmanship.

When the rest of the company, after gazing with lack-lustre eyes at the chimney-piece and the pictures for a couple of minutes, went tramping forward at the heels of their cicerone into the next room, I slipped behind the screen, so as to be out of sight of any chance stragglers, and waited there till the sound of footsteps and voices had died away in the distance. Then emerging from my concealment, I crossed to the chimney-piece and proceeded to take stock of the two sable caryatides. One was an exact counterpart of the other, but it was to the one on the left of the fireplace that the instructions given me by my father referred. What I had been told to do was, to press with my thumbs on the protruding eyeballs of the left-hand figure and then to mark what would follow.

This I now proceeded to do, but it was not till I had put forth all my strength that I could succeed in moving them by as much as a hairbreadth.

Then all at once, apparently under the influence of the continued pressure brought to bear on them, they sank back into their sockets, evidently acting on a hidden spring as they did so, for next moment, with a low, creaking noise, one side of the fireplace, which was covered with blue and white Dutch tiles, swung bodily open on hidden hinges, disclosing as it did so a black, cavernous opening, wide enough for a moderately-sized man to squeeze through without much difficulty.

I fell back a pace or two and stared at the opening with a heart that beat a little faster than common.

So far I had carried out my father's instructions to the letter, but I felt that I had no right to push my discovery a step further without making Lord Melmont acquainted with it, and leaving him to deal with it in whatever way he might deem advisable. Of course it was by no means improbable that the secret of the chimney-piece was known to him already, in which case I should merely get sneered at for my pains; but, on the other hand, there was just a possibility that he was an utter stranger to the existence of any such place, in which contingency, bearing in mind what my father had told me, it was evidently my duty to make him acquainted with it.

I had been told where to find the secret spring which would cause the door, so to call it, to fall back into its place, and I was on the point of putting out my hand to feel for it, when a slight noise behind me caused me to fall back with a start and look round. There, framed by the open doorway, stood the tall, gaunt figure of Lord

Melmont. How long he had been silently watching me I had no means of knowing.

"Pray, young sir, who are you? And what may be the nature of your business with my chimney-piece?" he demanded in his clear, haughty tones, as he came forward into the room.

"I am from America, sir; and my name is Myles Garner," I answered with a bow. "Your lordship favoured me with an interview at your hotel in London one day last September, the particulars of which may possibly not have wholly escaped your memory."

"So," he said, staring me hard in the face, "you are Myles Garner, are you?—the young man who had the consummate audacity to propose to wed my grand-daughter! I failed to recognise you. But no wonder—no wonder." He spoke the last words with a little sigh, and as if they were a recognition to himself that his memory was beginning to fail him. Then, drawing himself up a little, he went on: "And now, sir, will you inform me how it happens that I find you here, and alone? The circumstances are somewhat suspicious, as you must be aware."

"Before answering your lordship's question, allow me to say that you were the person I was wishing most to see at the moment you made your appearance."

He favoured me with a puzzled stare. "Well, sir, well; what does this rigmarole lead to?"

What I had to tell Lord Melmont may here be summed up as briefly as possible.

My father, who in early life, as already related, was a builder in a small way of business at Twyford Cross, was on more than one occasion employed by the late Lord Melmont to do certain repairs at the Towers. It was while thus engaged that he discovered, quite by accident, the secret opening in the chimney-piece of the Ethiopian Room, which opening led, by means of a stairway in the thickness of the wall, to an underground chamber, for which a use had doubtless been found in the old bitter days of religious intolerance and persecution. Lord Melmont had been aware of the existence of such a hiding-place, but had known neither in what part of the old mansion it was situated, nor where to look for the concealed entrance, the previous lord but one having died suddenly and without revealing the secret to his successor.

Lord Melmont appeared to be exceedingly pleased by my father's accidental discovery, but so desirous was he of keeping the knowledge from everyone that he bound him by an oath never to reveal it; and when he found that my father was desirous of emigrating, he not only urged the project forward, but provided him with funds wherewith to make a fresh start in the New World for which he was bound. The sum thus given him by Lord Melmont laid the foundation of my father's fortune.

Years went on, and my father, immersed in his own affairs, neither

sought nor received any tidings from his old home. Lord Melmont had been a man well advanced in life when my father left England, and it was hardly to be expected that he would be living thirty years later; still, as a matter of fact, no news of his death, or rather, of his disappearance, had reached my father till he heard the particulars from my lips on my return from England.

He was greatly struck by my story and by the mystery which still shrouded Lord Melmont's fate. It was then that he revealed to me the secret of the chimney-piece, and being unable to travel himself, he sent me back to England at the earliest possible moment, instructing me, in the first instance, if I found it possible to do so, to test the secret for myself, and afterwards to communicate the fact of its existence to the present lord, my father being profoundly impressed with the conviction that in the hidden chamber would be found the solution of a mystery which had hitherto baffled all attempts at its elucidation.

Such, in substance, was the narrative I unfolded to Lord Melmont as we stood there with the secret entrance yawning black and mysterious before us.

It was evident that he was much discomposed by what I had just told him. He, who before had been as firm and upright as some sturdy old oak, was now trembling in every limb, while his mouth twitched strangely. He would have been glad to sit down, I think, but the room was destitute of furniture. Two or three efforts were needed before he could control his voice sufficiently to enter upon what he wanted to say.

"The narrative you have favoured me with, Mr. Garner, is indeed a remarkable one," he at length contrived to say. "There may be something in it, or there may be nothing. Most probably nothing. I was certainly not aware that the Towers held any secret chamber, but now that there is evidence before us of the apparent existence of such a place, it becomes needful to at once probe the mystery to its fullest extent. Oblige me by waiting here till I return."

He was gone and back in a very little time. Following him came two footmen, one of them carrying a chair and the other a couple of small hand-lamps. The former of the two having placed the chair for his master in the middle of the saloon, retired. Then his lordship said: "Mr. Garner, will you please take one of those lamps and lead the way. Trant will follow you with the other, and I will await your return here."

This was something I had by no means bargained for, and at another time I might have resented the tone of authority in which Lord Melmont addressed me; just then, however, curiosity overpowered every other feeling.

Taking the lamp, I squeezed through the opening in the chimney-piece, and found myself at the head of a narrow flight of stone steps, exactly as my father had described.

Before descending, I waited for Trant to join me, who, poor fellow, looked very pale and far from happy in his mind. Then with lifted lamps we went slowly down, I first and Trant following me. At the bottom of the stairs was a door of oak studded with huge nails, on pushing which, it opened without difficulty. Passing through, we found ourselves in a room measuring about thirty feet by twenty, with a low archway at the further end, which proved to lead into a second, but much smaller, apartment.

In the middle of the room was seated a human figure, clothed in a robe or dressing-gown of some dark material, with its crossed arms resting on the table in front of it, and its head bent forward over them. Near at hand was a wrought-iron lamp of antique workmanship, and on the floor, in one corner, a large oak chest heavily clamped with metal. Other furniture there was none.

Holding my lamp above my head, I gazed down, but without venturing to touch it, on the silent, awesome figure at the table, of which, however, owing to its position and the fact of its robe wrapping it from head to foot, nothing could be seen save two withered, claw-like hands and a quantity of grey hair, which escaped from under its black velvet skull-cap. As I looked I felt sure in my mind that here at last was the solution of the mystery of the disappearance of the late Lord Melmont.

Presently I went back to his lordship, and broke the discovery to him. Over the details of what followed it is not needful that I should linger.

The remains were identified by Mr. Finch, the lawyer, and Bax, the ex-butler, both of whom were still living. In the oak chest were found, not only the family diamonds and the pair of Spanish candle sticks, but a quantity of valuable curios and bric-à-brac, which Lord Melmont had deposited there from time to time, evidently with a view to their safe keeping, several daring burglaries (as Bax called to mind) having been perpetrated in the neighbourhood about that time. In addition to the above, there were found certain securities having reference chiefly to investments in foreign bonds, which Lord Melmont had apparently deemed of such little account at the time that no mention was made of them in his will, but which in the interim had so increased in value that they now proved to be worth close on twenty thousand pounds. Thus, as it happened, although the present Lord Melmont had failed to inherit the twenty thousand pounds which his brother, almost with his last breath, had decreed should be his, yet an equivalent sum had come to him after all those years in a fashion as strange as it was unexpected.

It was on the sixth of July that Lord Melmont disappeared, at which time of year day breaks between two and three o'clock. As far as could be judged, he had sat up reading till there was enough daylight to enable him to find his way to the Ethiopian Room, and open the secret door without the aid of a lamp or candle, which he

would probably have found a difficulty in carrying, burdened as he must have been with the two heavy altar candlesticks. On reaching the underground chamber he had doubtless lighted the lamp which he kept there for such occasions, and had then put away the candlesticks in the chest; but what happened after that could only be conjectured.

Medical experts who were called in at the inquest, which had necessarily to be held, gave it as their opinion that, in all probability, the cause of death had been sudden failure of the action of the heart, and that his end had been a painless one.

It needs not to set down here by what means such a consummation was brought about; it is sufficient to record that my darling Wilma and I were married six months later, and that Lord Melmont in person gave his grand-daughter away.

T. W. SPEIGHT

ROCHESTER CASTLE.

BLUE sky, gray arches, and white, white cloud,
Gray eyes, white hands, and a free white crowd
Of wheeling, whirling fluttering things,
Pink feet, bright feathers, and wide warm wings;
Thousands of pigeons all the year
Fly in and out of the arches here.

What prisoned hands have torn at the stone
Where your soft hand lies, O, my heart, alone?
What prisoned eyes have grown blind with tears
To see what we see after all these years—
The free, broad river go smoothly by
And the free blythe birds 'neath the free blue sky?

And now, O, Time, how you work your will,
The pitiless walls are standing, still,
But the wall-flowers blossom on every ledge
And the wild-rose garlands the wall's sheer edge,
And where once the prisoned heart beat low
The beautiful pigeons fly to and fro.

In these sad stern arches they build and pair,
As happy as dreams, and as free as air,
And prisoned longing, and life-long pain
Man brings not into these walls again.
And yet, O, my love, with the face of flowers,
What do we bring in these hearts of ours?

E. NESBIT.

ELFINELLA.

NOT to detain the reader longer than is absolutely necessary from the story which I have undertaken to record, I will ask him to imagine himself an unseen listener in a room which contains two persons—a room in the prison of Razzoni, in South Italy: the first of the two, myself, an English doctor, at present on a visit to my friend the Governor of the prison; the other, Lorenzo Luigi, a prisoner who has just regained his freedom, after having served a term of twenty years for the crime of having killed a man.

I will not describe in detail the manner in which Lorenzo and myself had become fast friends; let it be enough to state the fact. I knew—no one acquainted with him could help knowing—that a man of more generous spirit never breathed, or one less likely, except under the influence of overwhelming passion, to be guilty of great crime. His history I had hitherto heard only from others, and in fragments; and now, as he sat there in my room, I had for the first time asked him to tell me, if the recollection would not cause him pain, the full story of his life.

He had at once consented. For some minutes he sat silent, lost in meditation, his fine face fixed in settled melancholy, and looking, though he was not more than forty, nearer sixty years of age.

Then he began to speak—and this is the story which he told me. It is no secret; and however extraordinary it appears, I, who heard him tell it, have no doubt whatever that it is strictly true. It has to me been deeply interesting; partly, no doubt, because I knew the man; but even to strangers I think it will not be much less so.

And it is not only on account of the strange events of which it tells that it is most remarkable. The effects of the bite of the tarantula spider, the strange method of its cure by music, and above all, the deep and lasting power of the musician over the patient after recovery—these things, it is true, are curious and little understood. But the story has an interest beyond these. It is a record, not only of most singular events, but of human passion, of sudden crime, of fearful punishment, of remorse most bitter and abiding.

I have endeavoured to reproduce the narrative as far as possible exactly as I heard it; but I have no hope of being able to convey the least impression of the vividness of the speaker's style, or of the flowing music of his rich Italian speech.

I was born, as both my father and mother were before me, under the shadow of the hills of Aspromonte.

My father was an orange-grower, and when I grew in years I became his helper in the groves. Our household contained, besides

my parents and myself, one other person—my little cousin, Elfinella. She was two years younger than I, and having been left an orphan when quite an infant, had been brought up by my mother as her own child.

Elfinella was hardly an Italian. Her mother had been of Northern blood, and seemed to have bequeathed to her daughter her whole nature, to the total exclusion of the father's share. Elfinella was a slight and fragile creature, lovely as an angel, with amber hair, large, light eyes, and a lily-like complexion, as different from myself as day from night, for I was as dark as a gipsy. Surely, in beauty no maiden ever equalled Elfinella; though hers was a beauty in its essence frail and flower-like.

In temperament she was incredibly sensitive. Her nerves were so delicate, so finely strung, that the least outward influence: a word, a glance, a strain of melody, a change of wind imperceptible to others: affected her as only great emotions affect those of coarser nature. She came and she departed like a shadow. Alas! perhaps from this very sensibility of being arose, at least in part, the strange and sad events which I have presently to describe.

When I was just twenty, my father died; and the care of my mother and Elfinella devolved upon myself.

My mother was old and sometimes querulous; but Elfinella and I were young—we were lovers. The term of our betrothal was approaching, and we were truly happy. It was a time of happiness doomed to be brief as it was sweet—of a love too soon to be disturbed.

One evening—never shall I forget that night of summer—a little before the hour of sunset, I was returning homewards from the hills, my soul filled as usual with thoughts of Elfinella. I wondered whether I should find her at a certain spot to which she sometimes strayed to meet me; and I stepped briskly forward, eager to reach the place, darting my eyes before me through the trees, in order to catch the earliest possible glimpse of her figure, if she were there.

Presently my heart leaped up with pleasure. She *was* there.

The place was a wild glade of mountain forest, backed by rocky and ravined escarpments, precipices, trees, a leaping torrent; on each side, forest; in front, an open lawn, covered with wild grass and flowers, stretching to the verge of a sheer cliff; far off, far down, beyond a beach of foam-fringed shingle, the sunset-tinted sea.

In the middle of the glade lay a fallen boulder; and upon it, at this hour of sunset, Elfinella was sitting.

She did not seem to see me coming. She sat motionless, apparently listening, her lips a little parted, her large eyes fixed, to some sound far away within the depths of the forest. I stopped and looked at her. Her face wore an expression of rapt attention. Nothing about her stirred. There was not wind enough to lift one fold of her light dress, nor one tress of her bright hair, as she sat there like a statue on the fragment of black crag.

Perceiving that she continued unconscious of my approach, and

wondering greatly what held her so intent, I advanced into the glade towards her. I did not speak; my footfall made no noise on the soft grass; and I was close beside her before she looked up suddenly, and saw me. She did not start; but laying one hand quickly on my sleeve, she said, without moving:

"Listen, Lorenzo!"

I did so; I listened attentively. But I could hear nothing, except the voice of the grasshoppers, and the low and murmurous wash of the cascade.

"What is it, Elfinella?" I demanded.

Elfinella looked at me with wonder. The marvellous acuteness of her senses, of which I have spoken, seemed to make it wonderful to her that others should be unable to hear a sound which she herself could hear so plainly.

"Listen!" she said again. "There—there!"

Again I listened; and this time I heard, or thought I heard, far away in the dim forest, a sound of music—a strange, wild, floating music, which wandered in the silence, and seemed ready to die upon the lightest wind. Indeed, even as I listened, it ceased—or at least I heard it no longer. I looked inquiringly at Elfinella. Her face expressed a mingled feeling of interest and of wonder.

"The stranger!" she said.

The stranger!—true. I understood her. Her words recalled to me a fact I had forgotten. I now recollected the existence of that most singular, most mysterious personage, whose recent arrival in the neighbourhood had been the cause of so much perplexity, and the origin of so many rumours.

The mansion in which he had taken up his abode was visible across an arm of the bay from the place where we were sitting. It was an old and gloomy edifice, retaining little token of the high estate from which its ancient towers had long since fallen. For many years previously it had lain vacant and neglected, until the present occupant had suddenly appeared within it.

His arrival had presented a standing mystery to the people of the village. Few had seen him; none could say that they had spoken with him. It was, however, generally reported that he was possessed of fabulous wealth. As to the reason of his sudden appearance in our neighbourhood, nothing certain was known. Some averred that he was a great musician, one who loved solitude, and sought it here amidst the wildness of the hills. Others, again, held that he had been the victim of some hopeless passion, or of some overwhelming sorrow, which caused him thus to shun the society of his fellow-men. The one thing well attested, the one undisputed fact about him was, that he was fond of lonely wanderings about the solitude of the mountains, attended by no companion but his mandolin, from which he awoke continually a strange and wild music, such as haunted for long after the minds of those who heard it.

It so happened that I myself had neither met with this strange person, nor had I hitherto heard the singular music of which others spoke. Now that at last I did so, I found my curiosity aroused, as Elfinella's had been. The music had ceased ; but at any moment it might break out again. In the expectation that it would do so, we sat silent for some minutes, both intently listening. For the moment no thought but that of the strange music occupied my mind.

Great Heavens ! What recalled me ?

A sudden and sharp cry—a cry of pain and terror. It came from Elfinella. I turned, and caught her in my arms as she sank back. She was shuddering from head to foot—she clung to me convulsively.

Startled and amazed, I sought the cause of her agitation. She held out her hand. On her wrist appeared a small red mark, like that produced by the sting of a nettle.

But no nettle had done this. I looked down. Her hand had been resting on the boulder ; and there, in a crevice of the stone, I descried the inflictor of the mischief—a hideous reptile, the size and colour of a toad, but with long horrible legs, and two dull eyes, staring upwards. Sick with horror, I stared in a sort of fascination at these loathsome eyes. I knew them well—too well ! It was the awful tarantula—the wolf-spider—the poison of whose sting is death. And Elfinella had been stung ! For some moments despair held me. Then in a frenzy of rage I pulled out my long knife and slashed the horrible beast in pieces.

Elfinella lay back in my arms looking as pale as death, and giving no sign of life except a few feeble moans. Instinctively I took her wrist, and applying my lips to the injured spot, strove to suck the poison from the wound. The attempt was vain. So far from visible improvement following, Elfinella was evidently growing weaker every moment. The extreme sensitiveness of her constitution rendered her only the more easy prey to the progress of the poison. Terrible in its swiftness was that progress ! Her eyes grew lustreless and lifeless, her arms ceased to clasp me, and at last only a low breathing showed that she still lived.

All this passed so quickly, that I had scarcely time to think what was best to be done before it seemed already too late to do anything.

And now, what *could* I do ? One course only seemed open to me: I must carry Elfinella home and obtain as quickly as possible the best advice I could.

But the village was more than a mile distant ; and in the meantime the poison might make fatal way. Moreover, I knew that the village folk generally regarded the sting of the tarantula as beyond remedy ; at least, the only remedy which I had ever heard proposed for it was one which seemed hardly to deserve the name. *Music.* Music had been known to work in certain of such cases a miracle of healing, in

which all drugs and simples failed; how, or in what manner, or with what certainty, I knew nothing. Nor did I at that moment bring to mind what report asserted concerning the strange and mighty power which the healing music holds ever after over the spirit which it has saved. Alas, that it escaped my recollection! And yet—had I remembered, what should I have done?

Even for a trial of that, or of *any* remedy, I feared that it would be too late. As I stooped to raise Elfinella in my arms my soul held no sensation but despair.

At that moment of agony a sound struck on my ears. My thoughts had been of music; and it was music which I now heard—the same, indeed, which I had heard before, but now close at hand.

I looked up and saw the musician before me. He was standing at the edge of the glade, not many yards distant, but apparently unconscious of our presence, which a ridge of the boulder partially concealed from his view. He had apparently paused there, his eyes fixed upon the rosy waters of the distant sea, while he touched his instrument almost inaudibly and with an air of abstraction.

Even in the state of agitation which possessed me, the striking appearance of his figure as he stood stamped itself indelibly upon my brain. His frame was tall, his hair and beard raven-hued, his dress entirely black; but his skin was so exceedingly, so startlingly pallid, that his hands and face stood out like patches of white light. His face was still young, and would have been remarkably handsome had not its strange pallor made it look unearthly. His eyes were large, dark, sunken, glittering and restless. The expression of his features was one of deep melancholy, yet not of calmness. It seemed, I know not how, to wear the dangerous quiescence of the lulled volcano.

Even as I looked at him the stranger withdrew his eyes from the horizon. He appeared to shake off by an effort the reverie into which he had fallen. As if to aid in the distraction of his thoughts he laid his hand more decidedly upon his mandolin. A sudden impulse seemed to seize him; the expression of his features altered; he struck passionately a full chord upon the strings. The tone thrilled through me strangely; but in a moment I thought not of its effect upon myself. My thought was of Elfinella.

The instant the sound fell upon her ears she rose up from my arms as if by miracle, and stood upright on the grass.

Her eyes opened widely and grew bright and eager, her frame trembled as if with strong excitement, while the deathly torpor which had held her seemed to vanish like a dream. Like a bird poising itself for flight, she wavered for some moments to and fro; then, as the mandolin broke out into a wild air, the tempestuous music seemed to seize her. Impetuously, unresistingly, as a leaf is swept over the grass before the wind, she whirled into the steps of an eddying dance.

As her figure glanced out of the shadow of the boulder into the open glade, it appeared for the first time in full view of the minstrel.

A thrill passed through me; I feared lest the unexpectedness of the sight should cause him to cease playing; but it did not. An expression, indeed, crossed his features, as of wonder and delight at the sight of the unlooked-for apparition which the enchantment of his music seemed to have conjured out of the earth; but, while his dark and glittering eye followed the movements of the flying figure, his fingers continued to sweep the chords of the mandolin, as if he feared lest with the cessation of the melody the summoned phantom might vanish into air.

But the delighted wonder with which he regarded Elfinella was nothing when compared with mine: albeit the very suddenness of the event bewildered me.

Again the scene had changed in a moment, with all the wildness of a dream. A moment before Elfinella had been lying there, motionless, in my arms, pale, faint, apparently dying. *Now*, she was before me, again all life and lightness, her white dress stirred like vapour, her slight form, rosy with the sunset, floating to the wild impulsion of the music like a thing enchanted. And that music! that enchantment! What was in it? Never have I heard such tones. Was it veritable incantation, or was it but the fever of my veins, which made it seem so wild and so strange, so heart-shaking, so unearthly? What demon sang in those weird strings? I sat silent; I sat breathless; my nerves thrilled.

Elfinella floated round the glade.

The dark eyes of the minstrel were fixed upon her; but whether she was aware of his presence at first I could not tell. She did not look towards him—her appearance was that of a person moving in a trance, her eyes open, but their gaze vague, veiled and inward. Lightly as a spirit of Heaven, she floated over the ground.

Her airy motion—the whirling circles of her measure—inclined at first towards the cliff, receding from the spot where stood the player, as if the power of that soul-searching music, even while it swayed, repelled her.

But after a while—I know not how prolonged—there came a change; the music altered; the terror of the tempest left it; the sound died down into a trembling sweetness.

And *now* from the pleading strings, sweet as an angel's song, a voice of love arose, divinely sighing. At its soft allurement, Elfinella turned towards the spot whence it proceeded; her steps drew nearer, nearer. Then again the music changed; it swelled, it deepened; with a voice of passionate meaning it seemed to call her to itself. All yielding, unresisting, she floated nearer, nearer—until, as the music broke at last into a kind of conquering cry, she reeled, she faltered, a long sigh escaped her lips, and, strengthless as a drifting rose-leaf, she sank down at the feet of the dark enchanter.

Not to the ground, however: he caught her in his arms. His head drooped over her until his glittering eyes were close to hers,

and his breath fanned her cheek. Breathlessly, Elfinella looked up at him; neither spoke nor stirred.

How long they might have remained thus motionless I know not. But with the cessation of the music I awoke to life and action. Emerging from the shelter of the boulder I advanced to express my obligation to the stranger, and my readiness to relieve him of his charge. He seemed unconscious of my approach; nor did he look up until the sound of my voice struck upon his ear, when he started suddenly, and letting Elfinella sink upon the grass, continued to regard me with stupefaction all the while I was speaking, as if I had been a being from another world. Even when I had finished he continued to eye me for a while in silence, as if failing to realise my presence or to take in the meaning of my words.

"I am a dreamer!" he said at length, "and you have awakened me, for which I owe you no thanks. And yet" (he looked at Elfinella) "I am glad it was no dream." He paused a moment, and then added to Elfinella in a different tone, as of assumed carelessness: "I am pleased to find I have been of service. My name is Bertrando Dolzi. May I ask for yours?"

"My name is Elfinella," she said, simply. Then she murmured softly to herself: "Bertrando!"

Bertrando Dolzi raised his velvet cap and bowed. He looked once more instantly, but intently, at Elfinella. Then turning again towards the forest, and neither stopping nor looking back, he walked rapidly away and was quickly lost to sight among the trees. I was not looking at Elfinella; and yet I knew that her eyes never left his figure until he vanished into the thicket, and they could see him no more.

It was with a heart relieved from the bitterness of mortal terror that I once more raised Elfinella in my arms. She was exhausted, it is true, and overstrained; yet I felt that she was no longer in danger; the symptoms which had so terrified me had vanished; her life was saved—how strangely!

Lightly she lay back in my arms, her head resting on my shoulder. She did not speak to me—but as I bore her down the rugged and now darkening glens towards the village I heard her murmur softly many times:

"Bertrando!"

For four or five days succeeding, Elfinella remained within her chamber. I should undoubtedly have been alarmed, but that my mother reassured me, and messages came frequently from Elfinella herself, that except for a slight fatigue and languor, only natural after the strong excitement through which she had passed, she felt no ill result. Nevertheless, when the fifth day ended and she had not yet appeared, I began to feel sincerely uneasy. And the feeling grew upon me.

On the evening of the sixth day I turned homeward somewhat earlier than usual. My mind had been filled since morning with

apprehensions, with forebodings for which I could assign no grounds, yet which I could not, for my soul, dispel. I feared, I knew not what. I felt, I knew not why, as if some dire calamity hung in the air. An overwhelming anxiety appeared falling like a pall upon my senses. A shadow which I could not lift seemed settling upon my soul.

From this unaccountable dejection of spirit I was suddenly and most pleasantly released. As I emerged from the borders of the forest I beheld—how at the sight my pulse bounded with returning life!—I beheld Elfinella herself before me.

The spot lay about mid-way between the village and the glade in which we had encountered the musician; and, like the glade, it was a point at which Elfinella was often accustomed to meet me on my return at evening from the hills. An old and ruined well stood there, its broken and rough rampart of moss stones overshadowed by an almond-tree, which now uplifted into the air its tremulous pink cloud of airiest blossom. The place was quite solitary and deserted. Several solemn olives stood around; and, motionless as these, Elfinella leaned silently against the stonework of the well.

I advanced eagerly to meet her. Her appearance half reassured me—*half* reassured me, and no more. And yet I could not have explained what troubled me, nor why any touch of my former disquietude should return. Her face, it is true, as I regarded her, wore a spiritual pallor scarcely earthly; but Elfinella's hue was always that of the Lent-lily, blanched by the full moon. Her eyes, it is true, looked deeper, larger, and more ethereal than those of the gazelle; but this was nothing strange—they were always so. Nor had those large eyes lost their wonted lustre. But—or was it my fancy only?—the smile which welcomed me *had* lost its wonted gaiety, and the hand I held lay listlessly in mine and answered not its pressure.

"Elfinella," I said, "you are not well—you should have stayed at home to-day. Why *would* you come to meet me? It was rash—confess it."

"No," she answered quickly, yet as if with some effort. "No, no. I am quite well now—as well as ever."

The words were natural; the voice had its usual tone; yet as Elfinella spoke I experienced a strange sensation, as if the words had been uttered by an unfamiliar tongue. I know not from what subtle and mysterious change of voice or manner the feeling rose; but so it was.

"Are you sure," I insisted anxiously, "that you are *quite* well, Elfinella—*quite* recovered?"

Elfinella paused; she sighed; I waited long for her answer, vainly. It did not come. I repeated my question earnestly and with rising apprehension.

She looked up into my eyes. Her own wore a troubled and a puzzled look.

"I am quite well," she said. "Believe me, Lorenzo, I am as well as ever. Ask me no more."

What mystery was this? I was perplexed—I was disturbed. Yet I was unwilling to disquiet her by further questions. For some minutes I remained in silence. Who can explain the movements of a lover's thoughts? At last I took her hand.

"Elfinella," I said earnestly, "assure me of one thing only and I will be content. Tell me that you love me still as ever."

Even as I spoke the wildness of the question struck my mind. Did Elfinella love me?—Oh, I knew it well! Again she raised her eyes to mine; but even as she was about to speak, a sound—a sudden, startling sound—struck on our ears. From the further side of the rampart of the well, which there rose to the height of several feet, it thrilled—*the mandolin!*

The mandolin! again we heard it; again the weird, wild music of the glade! Wilder, stranger even than before, it rang forth now on the still air.

And Elfinella?

At the first sound of the notes her hand closed on mine, as if some spasm wrung her. She did not stir; she uttered no cry; only by her clenched hands, and by the mingled fire and fear which filled her eyes, I felt the remembered music shake her spirit like a reed. In a little while, suddenly as it had begun, it ceased.

In a moment more the sombre and mysterious figure of Bertrando Dolzi appeared from behind the ruin of the rampart. How long he had been there—or whether he had been previously aware of our presence—I could not tell. On perceiving us, I thought he started; but he did not stop. Lifting his cap, with a most keen and piercing regard at Elfinella from his glittering eyes, he passed us by in silence, and continued his way towards the forest.

As he reached its borders, Elfinella sprang erect; for a few steps she seemed as if she would have followed him. Then sinking back, all white and trembling, against the rampart of the well, she pressed her hands tightly against her bosom.

"What is this," she murmured, in a half-frightened tone. Then in a still lower murmur, which yet I overheard, and which to my dying day I shall not cease to hear—"Bertrando!"

As she spoke, I, too, looked after the retreating figure. What I felt I neither know nor will attempt to describe. I know only that my heart beat thickly and my brain was wildly whirling.

With a strong effort I regained composure. We returned home in silence. Yet I was racked in soul with agitations. A crowd of thoughts, recollections, doubts, and fears, swarmed through my brain. I thought *now* of the strange after-power which, it is said, the wonder-working music holds over the spirit which it has rescued. I thought of Elfinella's most sensitive nature; of the peculiar influence, even

over myself, of the music which had saved her; of the dark and passion-wasted aspect of the minstrel; of those glittering eyes fixed fast on Elfinella's. And yet, how easily might I be mistaken! Passion cannot prophesy. Love is no seer. Affection often trembles at a shadow. I knew this—I confessed it: vainly. Night passed; dawn broke; day wasted. When again night fell, and it grew late, it was not homeward that my steps turned, but—towards the mansion of Bertrando Dolzi.

And yet I could not—for my soul I could not—have declared with what expectation, or with what purpose, I took that road.

It lay directly through the forest. I went slowly, pain-attended.

The sky was dull, with clouds; only at times did the rising moon look through their rifted spaces. Under and through the forest trees a low wind moaned restlessly, like a lost soul; and the inky gloaming, so sombre and so glacial, well suited with the sound and with my mood. The wood itself, as I traversed it, was almost as dark as midnight. The owlet hooted in the thickets; the fire-flies danced across the pathway; the eyes of the wild cat shone often in the gloom. These were ordinary sights and sounds. But—was the forest spectre-haunted? or was it merely an effect of fancy; or the shadowy influence of the uncertain light; or the rising and vacillating of some white film of mist, that now—and yet again—presented to my eyes, afar before me, a flitting shape? *Something* there was—but *what?* I could not tell. Nor—for my own thoughts wrapped me—did I greatly heed. Moreover, when I reached the edge of the forest the shape—if indeed it had existed—had vanished, and I thought of it no more.

The house of Dolzi now lay before me; a black mass, pricked at one point only by a gleam of light. The light shone from a tall window opening on a marble terrace which ran along the wing next which I stood. Beyond I perceived confusedly the crowded and dark-turreted buildings, gigantic and indistinct in the silence of the twilight. Silence reigned; the main entrance lay on the other side of the building; here all was still.

Urged by the same vague impulsion which had led me thither, I traversed a bridge formed of a single plank, crossed a space of wild and fenceless garden, and approached the lighted window.

All was still!

Hush! What was that? What stirred? What fluttered? Among the oranges beside the terraced casement, what shape leaned? I stopped and gazed. With difficulty I descried its outline. A woman's figure, dressed in white, stood there, peering from between the orange-branches into the interior of the room.

I suppose that in other circumstances I should have felt surprise; as it was, I had no space for reflection or for wonder. Scarcely had I made the discovery when from within the brilliant room awoke —softly, sweetly, as an angel's song—*the mandolin!*

Instantly the figure on which my eyes were bent issued from the shadow of the bushes. For a moment it paused before the window; then it stepped quickly over the threshold and vanished into the room. An exclamation of joyful astonishment succeeded; and the music ceased.

With no more noise than a panther makes in creeping through a jungle, I stole forward on the dark terrace and looked into the room.

I desire to tell you, calmly and without comment, what I *saw*; on what I *felt* I must be silent—nor were my feelings such as words can picture.

What I saw, then, was this—a man and a young girl alone in that apartment; the girl fallen, pale as death, upon a couch, the man beside her, kneeling, cherishing her hand in his, his face and glittering eyes bent close to hers. The man was Bertrando Dolzi. The girl—was Elfinella!

While I stared in, transfixed, at this spectacle, Elfinella's eyes closed and she uttered a low moan. Dolzi gazed for a moment into her face, and then—he pressed his lips to hers.

The sight maddened me. Up to that moment I had nourished a half hope that he had put forth his strange power unconsciously, and would not take advantage of it. But now, as I looked at him, I knew that all such hope was vain.

The next moment he rose hastily to his feet, muttering to himself: "Wine, wine."

He glanced round the apartment as if in search of what he sought, but seemingly without success. Then pausing for a moment to look back at Elfinella, who still lay white and motionless, he hurried from the room.

Up to this moment my faculties had lain stunned and helpless. I saw, indeed, and heard clearly; even with unnatural clearness; but my heart had ceased in its beating—nor could I, had my soul been in the balance, have stirred or uttered a sound. Wide awake, I was in a state like that of nightmare, in which the sleeper strives to utter a word on which his life depends, without being able to pronounce it.

Suddenly—in a breath—the spell fell from me. The power of motion returned. I was free—*to act!*

To act—but how? I know *now*, what wisdom whispered. I know that, acting wisely, I should have taken Elfinella away with speed and silence; that, by loving and quiet means, I should have fought against the strange power which held her irresistibly in its grasp; that I should either have removed her from the neighbourhood or kept her safely and watchfully protected until the stranger had left the country, or until the power of his presence had passed away. I might so have saved her—I think so now with a torture of remorse. But at that moment a blind rage and thirst of vengeance ruled and filled my soul.

I sprang into the room.

At the sound of my entrance, Elfinella unclosed her eyes and saw me. With a faint shriek she raised herself from the couch and gazed at me in stupefaction.

It was not with her that I felt anger. The mysterious power which had lured her thither—that, or rather its possessor, was the object of my passion. Towards *her* I felt no anger—no. I uttered not a word; only with my hand I motioned towards the open window—for *she* could not be witness of what I had to do. It was enough—the aspect of my face controlled her to my will. Elfinella arose with a low cry, her eyes still fixed on mine. Then veiling her face with her hands, she fled forth into the night, and I was left alone.

Alone! And Dolzi returning! returning all eager, expecting to find Elfinella awaiting him—and to find *me*. I laughed—yes—laughed with the fierce joy which filled my soul as I thought of it—as I pictured how his face would alter as he entered and looked round. My brain burned with the recollection of the kiss which I had seen him press to the lips of Elfinella. A jealous rage rose up within me. Drunk with the giddy wine of vengeance, I drew forth my dagger, and waited for his return.

Only with enormous effort could I force myself to wait in patience, without bursting from the room in search of him, or forewarning him of danger as he approached.

I looked round the room. It was not large, but it was richly furnished. The walls were painted with old frescoes, the ceiling bore a device of rosy boys sporting among vine leaves; heavy and rich-hued draperies veiled the door and drooped about the window; the floor was brilliant with squares of bloomy wools; ottomans of luxurious softness stood around; in each of many recesses a marble pedestal bore aloft a gleaming image; a mirror shone above the chiselled hearth; a red-screened lamp burned upon a table, where lay books, music, drawings; curious ornaments from many regions of the world were scattered prodigally here and there. I saw also several musical instruments of various kinds; and there, beside the couch, lay—*the mandolin*. I stared upon it as if it had been a living being, an enemy capable of sensation. Then, lifting my foot, I stamped heavily and vindictively upon the delicate wood-work, and laughed to see it lie splintered into a thousand pieces.

But hush! A step—he comes!

With my eyes fixed on the door, my bright blade ready in my hand, I stood ready. He entered quickly, silently—and then stopped short, amazed. His eyes wandered round the room in search of Elfinella; and the look, even while I felt my triumph, maddened me. I glanced at his side. In the crimson girdle which he wore a dagger hung. It was well—I would not willingly have slain an unarmed man. Before he could recover possession of his senses I had thrown myself between him and the door.

"Draw, villain," I cried, hoarsely.

I had him now before me; there was no retreating; either he or I must die.

"Draw, villain!" I repeated—and I said no more.

He read in my face the uselessness of speech. Without a word he laid his hand on his dagger, and the bright steel flashed in the air.

For some moments we stood face to face, glaring at each other, each watching for an opportunity to strike.

Suddenly he lifted his left hand, and hurled full at my head the wine-flask which he still held. His object was, no doubt, to take me at advantage; but, as it chanced, the action proved his doom. The flask struck me on the temples with a force which shattered the thin glass to fragments. Stunned by the blow, and blinded by the wine which streamed about my face, I rushed upon him, striking out fiercely and wildly. The force of my blow beat down his guard, and my blade struck him. He staggered for a moment, spasmodically striking at the air with his dagger—and then fell.

It was his death-fall. He groaned once or twice, but stirred no more. My revenge was accomplished. I turned away, and went out by the open window into the darkness of the night.

As Lorenzo ceased speaking, there was silence between us for some minutes. The rest of his story I knew well; I knew how he had gone direct to the authorities and given himself up to justice. I knew, of course, the result of the trial, and the subsequent history of his life in prison. But one thing, as yet, I did not know; there was a point on which I longed to ask a single question.

"And Elfinella?" I said.

If great had been the crime, great was the retribution. When shall I forget the look of agony that crossed his features, above their wonted look of calm and fixed despair?

"Before my trial was ended," he said—and his voice, though calm, was terrible to hear—"Elfinella was dead!"

WHISPERING WOODS.

(*Illustrated.*)

In the woodland's green recesses,
In the cool and fragrant glooms,
Where the morning dews yet linger
On the woodbine's flaunting blooms
And the sunbeams and the shadows
Chase each other to and fro,
Summer breezes whisper, whisper
To my heart of long ago.

Where I sit, I see the cottage
In whose porch so oft we met,
And the lattice where the roses
That she loved are blooming yet—
Doves are cooing in the tree-tops—
And a murmur like the sea
Rustles softly through the branches
As the breezes sing to me.

On the giant oaks and beeches
Summer's green has turned to gold,
And the bracken oft has faded
Since those summer days of old,
When the woodland glades were haunted
By the sunny, smiling face
Whose sweet features on my canvas
I essayed to fit and trace.

On the mossy sward the shadows
Dance as softly to and fro,
And the clover-scented breezes
Just as sweetly come and go;
As of old the whispering beeches
Have their spell upon me cast,
But their shade is haunted only
By the memory of the past.

HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

AP
4
A7
v.49

The Argosy

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY